

Ameyuri

by iWandering-Shapeshifter

Category: HakuÅ•ki/è-„æ;æé¼¼

Genre: Adventure, Humor

Language: English

Characters: Okita S., Saito H.

Status: Completed

Published: 2013-05-21 23:44:23

Updated: 2013-06-09 17:09:08

Packaged: 2016-04-26 21:17:12

Rating: T

Chapters: 22

Words: 54,914

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: "ever since i was little, not once did i imagine that i would be a samurai. as i wield my blade, i only pray that i can still see tomorrow..." rated T for various action scenes and Souji's perverted comments : 'D. mostly Saitou/OC; read/review please!

1. Not Everybody Likes Snow

****A/N****_: after reading such good reviews for my previous Hakuouki fics, i felt really compelled to publish this latest addition. FYI, it's told from Kawa's POV (1st Person). also, after reading said reviews, i figured it'd be good to bring Kawa to the front stage again._

>so enjoy the fic!

****EDIT****: the title translates to "_Rain Lily_"

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 01: Not Everybody Likes Snow**

A stale chill crept into the darkened room.

I shivered, curling up tighter beneath the blankets and mentally cursing the damn cold front that had plagued Kyoto.

Someone knocked on the door of my room, from the back hallway it sounded. "Yasakawa-kun, are you awake yet? Breakfast is prepared," the familiar voice of one of the men wondered, his tone kind.

I inwardly groaned; _damn it, but it's cold_, I thought with a pout. "I'm on my way. Thank you, Inoue-san." I replied, hearing the shuffling of his feet disappear down the hallway.

A heavy sigh escaped me as I sat up in bed, flinching and rubbing my arms. "Damn, it's cold." I grumbled, throwing the blankets off and straightening to my feet to hurry and get dressed.

I threw the sleeping yukata off, slipping into my usual pair of medium navy-colored hakama, pulling my white vest-like kosode on over my shoulders and securing it beneath the hakama's waistline, using my blue sash and tying it like a belt at my waist.

Goosebumps erupted down my naked arms, making me flinch again and hold myself.

>I grumbled under my breath as I looked through the closet for a haori to cover my arms; I paused short of finding one to see a familiar haori staring at me point-blank.

A pale blue haori hung in the middle of the closet, the bottoms of the sleeves highlighted with a white triangle design; I smiled at the haori and snatched a dark red haori from the side, closing my closet door and slipping my arms through the sleeves of the red robe.

I pulled my mirror from my desk to look at myself; my black hair that fell to mid-back looked scruffy and messy, making me frown.

>Another sigh escaped me as I untied the blue hair-tie from my wrist and raised my arms to tie my hair back into a messy topknot, looking at my reflection again.<p>

My gray eyes stared at my reflection as most of my hair was kept out of my face; I smiled, lowering the mirror to the desk and stepping away from the desk to throw my doors open to face the day.

As I had figured, it'd snowed last night; I scowled and pulled the lapels of the haori closer to my chest, exhaling and lifting a hand to scratch the back of my head. "Geez, doesn't God know not everyone is used to snow?" I wondered to myself, hearing my stomach growl.

I pouted, huffing before I sprinted to the main room to quell my hungry stomach.

.....oOo.....

Slightly raucous voices were coming from the main room that served as both the dining room and meeting room.

I smiled to myself and shook my head, exhaling as I threw open the door to let the sun shine on the occupants of the dining room.

"Oi, close the door! It's freezing!" A voice barked indignantly; I looked into the room to see a familiar brunette with blue eyes rubbing his muscled arms and scowling at me.

He blinked before he smiled lightly. "Oh, it's you, Kawa-chan! Well in that case, good morning." He said, trying to cover up for the sore expression that marred his face a second ago.

I rolled my eyes at him and sighed, closing the door as I stepped into the room. "Morning to you too, Shinpachi." I replied, sitting down near the front of the room.

A second man, a brunette with shaggy hair and teasing green eyes, looked at me and smirked. "You don't like the new uptake in weather, Kawa-chan?" He wondered as I rubbed my arms.

I stuck my tongue out at him. "Not really, not when I have to wake up feeling like a frozen piece of meat." I replied; he chuckled, filling a spare bowl with rice from the cooker and handing it to me to put it on my tray.

A third man, with long jet black hair and violet eyes, shot a look at me. "Maybe you shouldn't wear that vest if you're that cold." He reasoned calmly, his arms that were folded in his purple kosode sleeves sliding out as he ate a clump of rice with his chopsticks.

I made a face at him and huffed. "So you want me to go around the barracks topless? Geez, nii-san, I never pegged you to be that lewd." I remarked, seeing him spit out his tea in surprise.

Both the brunette with green eyes and a second man, with raven-black hair tied in a loose ponytail and cool blue eyes, blushed at the idea, the remaining men in the room also letting their faces color pink at the image.

I glared at them. "Pigs, all of you! Geez," I barked, whacking my half-brother on the back as he coughed.
>"D-damn it, Yasakawa, I hate it when you do that!" He snapped, scowling at me with annoyed violet eyes.<p>

The brunette with green eyes, Okita Souji, looked over at my half-sibling and smirked. "At least I wouldn't hafta pay to see ya topless, Kawa-chan," he mused lightly.

I shot him a death glare. "Keep it in your pants, you idiot leech." I warned frostily.

The black-haired man with blue eyes, Saitou Hajime, cleared his throat and continued with his food.
>"I'd stop now, were I you, Okita-san. Considering Kawa's skill with a blade, she would most likely do worse things to you than try and cut your head off." He reasoned patiently before eating a clump of rice.<p>

I looked at him and blushed slightly, hearing myself giggle. "Throwing compliments this early in the mornin', Hajime-kun? Such a gentleman." I sighed dramatically.

He paused and glanced up at me, a faint rosiness staining his cheeks, before he looked at his food, seeming to become really interested in his rice and soup; I smirked lightly.

A sigh escaped the third man, my half-brother Hijikata Toshizou. "Yasakawa, stop heckling Saitou-san. It's too early in the morning to hear you two debating." He scolded before sipping his tea.

I felt a slight tic in my cheek when he spoke my full name, scowling up at him. "It's too early for you to be callin' me by my full name too, Toshi. How many times have I told you? It's 'Kawa'." I shot back indignantly, looking away with a huff.

One of the other men, the tall redhead with gold eyes, chuckled. "Now I really see the resemblance between you two, Hijikata-san." He mused lightly.

Toshi shot a look over at the captain. "Honestly," he grumbled, stung at the fact that the only way anyone could tell we were related was because we were both too stubborn to lose an argument.

I smiled over at him. "I'm touched, Sano," I teased lightly.

>Someone groped my ass from behind, making me yelp. "There, you're touched; better now?" The brunette mused with a sigh.<p>

"_Bakkerro__!_"

WHACK.

"**OW**! Geez that hurt, Kawa-chan!" Souji whined, rubbing the new bump on his head gingerly and looking up at me with sore green eyes.

"Pervert! That's what ya get for groping my ass!" I shouted annoyedly, blushing and glowering at him.
>"Well can you blame me? It's so cute and roundâ€|! Ow, hey don't hit me!" He yelped when my right fist hit him on the head a second time.<p>

"Idiot letch!" I barked.

The rest of the men in the room exhaled at the scene, returning to their meals.

"Inoue-san, would you please check on our guest?" I heard the commander, Kondou Isami, ask Inoue-san, interrupting my beating of Souji as we had finished eating and the dishware was taken away to the kitchen.

"Kondou-san, what guest?" I asked, looking at him confusedly.

He looked at my brother. "Well, Toshi?" He wondered.

He cleared his throat and looked at the occupants of the room (myself included).
>"Last night, we encountered two Furies that had escaped from our headquarters. They killed two ronin, but luckily, we found them before they could cause any further damage to the residents of Kyoto. After exterminating them, we saw that there was a witness." He explained.<p>

I widened my eyes slightly before looking down, crossing my arms in the sleeves of my _haori_. "You didn't kill him?" I wondered quietly, looking up at my brother.

He shook his head. "No, we didn't; the witness was just a boy, he didn't appear to have aided the Furies." He replied.

I nodded and looked down at my _tabi_; the memory of my first encounter with a Fury flashed in my mind's eye, the sight of those beady red eyes that longed for blood and that pure white hair that

looked like snow! I clenched my fists slightly, keeping my eyes cast downward.

The next time I saw one, I would cut him down. I wasn't that scared girl I was when that Fury stormed into my room and almost killed me.

The door slid open, stirring me from my reverie; I looked up and blinked back the sunlight from my eyes, seeing the silhouette of Inoue-san and the silhouette of a figure a few inches shorter than him standing in the doorway.

"Good morning," Souji spoke lightly, sounding as if he'd known the second person for his entire life.

I watched as Inoue-san and the figure entered the room, sitting down near me; I managed to get a better look at the second person.

This witness was nothing more than a child! Ontop of that, from what Toshi said, this witness didn't look like a boy, but actually was! a girl.

>I looked at the pink *kosode* and pale gray *hakama*, looking at the girl's big brown eyes and medium brown hair tied into a ponytail.

Poor thing, to have been dragged back here by my brother! I frowned softly and crossed my arms in the sleeves of the *haori* again.

"!Stop it, Souji; he'll think it's true." Hajime's voice stirred my thoughts again; I looked up at him, looking up at the girl to see a slight blush staining her cheeks at Souji's comment.

He looked at the girl. "You don't have the marks of the tatami mat on your face." He assured her.

"That's mean, Hajime-kun; you didn't have to tell him." He declared lightly.

I backhanded him. "Idiot, don't be such a jerk!" I scolded, seeing him rub his head gingerly.

"All three of you, knock it off! Stop this idiotic chatter." Toshi ordered, perking my ears.

I scowled slightly at him and quieted, huffing. *Jerk*, I mused inwardly, looking over at the three remaining men as they commented on the newcomer. I smiled slightly.

Ah yes, of course, I thought, *the three comedians*.

Todou Heisuke, Nagakura Shinpachi, and Harada Sanosuke always reminded me of three brothers; if they weren't playfully competing with each other, they were bickering like puppies over food at meal times.

"Cut it out, all three of you!" Kondou-san barked, making me jump slightly; Souji snickered at my side before I kneed his thigh in response, pursing my lips.

"I'm sorry for all the gossip. Please don't be afraid; close the door and sit down." The voice of reason around here, Yamanami Keisuke or "Sannan" as we all referred to him, said to the girl in a kind tone.

She nodded and closed the door, sitting down at my right.
>I looked at her again as Kondou-san introduced himself, Sannan-san, and Toshi to the girl.<p>

"Kondou-san; why are you telling him all this?" Toshi spoke up, scowling reprovingly at him.

Kondou-san looked sheepish.
>"I-is that bad?" He wondered.<p>

"Ya don't have to introduce yourself to the person you're going to interrogate." Shinpachi commented.
>"Well, that over-formality is just like Kondou-san, isn't it?" Sano chimed.<p>

I rolled my eyes at him and sighed, lifting a hand to scritch the back of my head. _Honestly, sometimes I wonder if you guys aren't still ten years old_, I thought, vaguely listening in to Hajime as he recounted the scene last night to the witness.

"I didn't see anything!" The girl exclaimed in her defense, perking my ears.
>"Really?" Heisuke wondered.<p>

"I didn't!" She insisted.

"Eh? But from what Souji said, you helped the ronin." Shinpachi piped up suspiciously.
>"That's not true; I was running away from those ronin! Then the Shinsengumi came, and I was technically saved by them." She explained; I lifted a brow as I could almost smell the fear in her words.<p>

Poor kid.

"Come on, let's kill him. It's the best way to silence him." Souji piped up.

"But" The girl began again.

"Idiot!" I barked, smacking him upside the head again.

"Ow" Geez, your right hand is as hard as ever, Kawa-chan!" Souji grumbled, rubbing his head gingerly.

I huffed.
>"Well that's what you get for being so mean to the kid! Keep begging for his death and I swear that I'll beat you into a coma." I threatened annoyedly.
He looked at me and huffed, a smirk crossing his lips. "Is that right?" He wondered slyly.

"Yasakawa, **enough**." Toshi snapped, perking my ears; I winced when he spoke my full name, throwing him a death glare before I huffed and straightened to go sit down next to Heisuke, leaning against the wall.

"Please; I won't say a thing to anybody!" The girl pleaded.

"That's enough, take him away." He ordered, looking away from the girl.

She looked up as Hajime grabbed her arm and dragged her out of the room, her pleas ringing in the air outside.

I looked over at my brother and ran a hand through my hair. "Honestly, nii-san, he's just a kid. Younger than Heisuke, prolly. What merit would there be if the kid was beheaded for something he didn't do?" I reasoned patiently.

He looked in my direction as I heard Heisuke bark indignantly at my comment. "If I need your opinion, I'll ask for it. Other than that, be quiet." He returned.

I made a face and sighed, folding my arms behind my head. "Fine, but if you get in trouble for doin' something you shouldn't have done, don't come whining to me, Toshi-nii." I pointed out.

He seemed to quiet down before he huffed. "You might have a point, though." He mused, perking my ears; I looked at him with one open eye.

>"Hm?"<p>

"Perhaps we shouldn't dispose of him after all." He suggested; I opened both eyes, looking over at him confusedly.

"Huh? No disposal?" Shinpachi piped up in disbelief.

"Is it alright like this, Hijikata-san? He saw them, the failed ones!" Sano chimed in, both men looking at my brother with serious eyes.

>"Last night, we killed two warriors that refused their orders. He was just passing by." Toshi explained calmly.<p>

"Is that all you want to say?" Sannan-san wondered, speaking up since the girl had entered the room.

"Actually, that's all that kid can understand from all this." He replied.

"Well, if you say so, Toshiâ€|" Kondou-san mused.

"That was your plan all along, wasn't it?" Sannan-san asked.

>"Otherwise you wouldn't have brought him back here alive; anyway, we have to protect the secret. We can't just release him like that." He mused; my brother huffed and looked away in reluctant defeat.<p>

"I know; I still have some things to check out." Toshi snapped, straightening to his feet and leaving the room.

I watched him leave and sighed. "Point." I mused.

Souji glanced over at me and smirked. "I'm surprised he even put what you said into consideration, Kawa-chan, knowing your brother." He mused.

I looked at him and returned the smirk. "I know, I'm still trying to get over the shock!" I declared dramatically.
>Shinpachi, Heisuke, Sano and Souji laughed.<p>

* * *

><p>"So, that's why a girl dressed like a boy and was wearing men's clothing." Toshi mused.
Kondou-san nodded. "I seeâ€|" He blinked. "Wait, you're a girl!?" He barked in surprise.

"You're a woman!?" Shinpachi chimed in shock.

"Is that true?" Heisuke barked.

I covered my mouth to hide my laughing. "I think you guys really need to get glassesâ€|" I giggled.
>"H-hey, that's not funny, Kawa-chan!" Heisuke quipped.<p>

Kondou-san groaned and bowed his head in shame. "I, Kondou Isami, made a terrible mistake! I didn't know you were actually a girl!" He apologized.

I sweatdropped and smiled sheepishly. "Now, now, Kondou-sanâ€|" I began.

"She's obviously a girl." Souji piped up lightly; I ribbed him. "Oi, then why did you insist she was a boy this morning?" I demanded.

"If what you're saying is true, how do you prove it?" Shinpachi asked curiously as he, Heisuke and Sano looked at her.

"'Prove it'?" The girl, Yukimura Chizuru, repeated in confusion.

"How about you take your clothes off?" Sano teased lightly.

I threw my cup at him. "Pervert, knock it off! Geez, it's a wonder you all don't sleep with the damn geisha at Shimabara whenever you go there." I barked, scowling at him, Souji and Shinpachi.

"Eh?" The girl blinked in confusion; I looked at her and smiled lightly.

"These guys won't hurt you, okay? Or _else_." I added grimly, looking at the aforementioned captains pointedly.
>She seemed to smile back, ever so slightly. "T-thank you, Yasakawa-san." She replied.<p>

I blinked and then chuckled.
>"It's Kawa; Hijikata Yasakawa. And it's nice to formally know your name, Chizu-chan." I added with another smile.<p>

Chizuru laughed weakly. "Likewise, Yasakawa-chanâ€|" I mean, Kawa-chan." She stammered sheepishly.

"Oi, since when does she ever act _this_ niceâ€|?" I heard Shinpachi ask Souji behind my back.

"Since there's actually another **girl** around, Nagakura! Geez, with so many idiotic men around, it's hard to maintain being polite." I snapped indignantly, looking away and scritching the back of my head in frustration.

>Souji chuckled. "Not all of us are idiots here, at least not from your point of view, Kawa-chan~," he teased with a wink.<p>

I blushed slightly before my elbow jabbed into his ribs, folding my arms in the sleeves of my _haori_. "Shut up, you leech." I growled, looking away.

"You said your name was Yukimura Chizuru?" Sannan-san asked, perking my ears.

>She nodded.
"Is your father Yukimura Kodou, the Western medicine doctor?" He asked again; she widened her eyes.

"Do you know my father?" She asked alertly.

Toshi's face twitched slightly; I looked between her and him, Sannan-san and Kondou-san. I hadn't heard much about Kodou-san; all I knew was that he was the one responsible for creating the "medicine" that turned men into Furies.

"So she's Kodou-san's daughterâ€¦!" Kondou-san mused sadly.

"How much do you know?" Toshi asked the girl.

" 'How much' what?" Chizuru repeated in confusion.

I looked at him. "Nii-san, she doesn't know anything." I defended gently.

>"Kawa, be quiet. Don't play dumb, girl. I'm talking about Kodou-san." He shushed me, scowling at the girl.<p>

"What do you mean; has something happened to my father?" She asked the room at large.

"It happened a month ago; there was a fire at the clinic your father was working in; since then, he's been missing." Hajime explained, as was his role among the group to be the voice of explanation.

>"It's strange, his body wasn't found among the rubble. There's a possibility he's involved in a case." Sannan-san picked up from where Hajime left off.<p>

"We're also looking for Kodou-san." Toshi added. "If you don't say anything about what happened last night, we will look after you while we're searching for your father." He declared.

She perked up; I looked at him curiously. "Nii-san," I began in surprise.

"Don't worry; we'll surely find your father!" Kondou-san smiled in assurance.

>"Thank you very much!" Chizuru said.<p>

"It's great that you weren't killed; at least for now." Souji declared, smiling at her when she looked at him.

"Y-yes," she muttered.

I pat her shoulder gently, scowling at my friend. "Give it a rest, will you? It's too late to be hearing you promise a swift death to the girl." I scolded.
>He smiled that cat-like smile at me. "Whatever you say, princess." He said with a wink; I pouted and huffed. "Idiot." I grumbled.<p>

"Well, if that's the case, then we'll have to treat her better!" Shinpachi piped up.
>"You have a soft spot for girls, Shinpatsu. That's the only reason ya treated Kawa-chan nicely the first few months she was here!" Heisuke protested.
"Eh? O-oh yeah, I forgot about that." Shinpachi chuckled sheepishly.

I sweatdropped and rolled my eyes, scritching the back of my head. "Honestly..." I muttered.

"It's too early to take her in like this, though." Heisuke mused.

"It's fine, considerin' our base will be more cheerful as well, so Shinpachi isn't the only one happy about this now that there are two girls around." Sano chimed lightly.

"But if she's not a warrior, we'll have to think about how we'll be treating her. Yasakawa-kun is a different case, considering she's Hijikata-kun's younger sister as well as being already accustomed to our rules ontop of knowing how to wield a sword." Sannan-san said thoughtfully.

"Then we'll put her under someone's protection, like Kondou-san or Sannan-san," Toshi commented, his arms folded in the sleeves of his _haori_.

Souji grinned lightly at him. "Sorry, Hijikata-san, but I think it'd be best to give that responsibility to the one who proposed the idea." He said lightly, perking my ears as well as my brother's.

He blinked.
>"Yeah, I feel safer if she's under Toshi's protection." Kondou-san chimed.<p>

"Then it's settled, Hijikata-kun. We're all counting on you to watch out for the little lady." Sannan-san said lightly, both he and Kondou-san smiling innocently at my brother.

I looked over at my brother and snickered as he cursed the men. "Talk about stepping into it, nii-san." I mused lightly.

He scowled over at me. "***You** stay out of this, you've said enough." He growled.
>I raised my hands in surrender. "Don't bite my head off just yet, nii-san! 'Sides, not to be mean or anythin', but you are strongest with a _katana_ in hand." I added innocently.

Toshi scowled again and huffed, cutting his gaze to the side and scritching the back of his head in frustration. "Brat." He grumbled.

* * *

><p>He perked up and smiled at me as I came forward. "Your teeth still chattering from the cold?" He teased.<p>

I rolled my eyes and sighed. "No, I'm fine." I looked at the girl and smiled lightly.

>"He hasn't been giving you trouble, has he? I know my brother asked the guys to keep guard over your room in shifts, but this oneâ€| " My foot jabbed his knee. "Tends to not know when to keep his mouth shut." I explained.<p>

Souji rubbed his knee, pouting up at me. "What am I, your personal training dummy?" He grumbled as I leaned against the wall he sat against.

>I laughed quietly. "Almost; if you didn't run your mouth as often as you do, I wouldn't scold you." I replied with a smirk.<p>

He returned the smirk as his eyes looked mischievous. "Shame you never wanna try those '_punishment_' techniques out in the bedroom," he mused slyly.

I blushed humbly and huffed, crossing my arms in my sleeves. "Watch your mouth, pervert; there are _virgin_ ears present." I snapped, indicating Chizuru.

He looked up at me with one green eye. "***You** ain't no virgin, as far as I know." He teased lightly.

I blushed again and sputtered a huff, kicking him.

>"It's too cold for you to try and disprove that." I growled.<p>

Souji chuckled.

>"One day, princess, yer gonna beg me on your knees, and I'm gonna enjoy every second of givin' it to ya." He said smugly.<p>

I scoffed and felt my face burn up at his words, lifting a hand to scritch the back of my head in frustration. "Pervert." I grumbled.

"_Now_ what is he telling you?" A familiar voice wondered knowingly, perking my ears; I looked up to see Hajime standing on the other side of the door, a tray of food in his hands.

I smiled in relief at his presence. "The usual," I replied with an exasperated sigh.

>He huffed and returned the smile.
"That doesn't surprise me; he's been trying to get you to sleep with him for months." He mused.

"Hey, I told ya that was a secret, Hajime-kun!" Souji griped, blushing slightly.

I looked down at Souji and giggled. "How cute, you're blushing." I teased.

>He huffed. "Oh yeah?" He tried to grab my ankles; I jumped away in time, dancing away to stand behind Hajime as he sighed patiently.<p>

"Too slow, love!" I declared with a laugh.

"Honestly, you twoâ€¦" He grumbled.

I looked at him and smiled, kissing his cheek. "Don't pout like that, Haji-kun." I advised, seeing his cheeks blush slightly.

Souji huffed and looked away. "Ya can be so cruel sometimes, Kawa-chan," he said dramatically.

I looked at him and rolled my eyes. "That's for that virgin comment." I remarked with a smirk.

>He made a face, making me laugh.<p>

"S-Saitou-san, you heard me talking to myself too?" Chizuru piped up, perking his ears.

He nodded.

She sweatdropped and looked down in embarrassment.

>I made a face. "Nice going, you two. It's not like we're gonna report what you said to the whole of Kyoto, Chizu-chan." I pointed out patiently.<p>

We perked up as Heisuke showed up, pointing out that Hajime was gonna miss dinner.

>"I have a job to do." He remarked, indicating his guard duty.<p>

"Not only that, but Hijikata-san said for us to keep an eye on her at all times." Souji chimed as he straightened.

"Well why doesn't she just eat with the rest of us?" Heisuke asked. "It's okay, because Hijikata-san is out to Osaka on business." He added to the girl.

"You're right; I'd get bored just watching this girl eat." Souji said thoughtfully, taking the tray from Hajime's hands and giving it to Heisuke.

>He looked at him in confusion. "Eh; why did you give it to me?" He asked.
"You were the one who proposed it." He replied, walking off. "Let's go; Kawa, you comin'?" He called.

I rolled my eyes at him and sighed. "Yeah, keep your topknot on. Chizu-chan, come on." I said, opening her door for her.

Chizuru blinked. "Um, Kawa-chan, Iâ€¦" She began.

"It's not a big deal, okay? Let's go before Sano and Shinpachi eat what's on your tray." I waved it off, taking her wrist and leading her out of the room and down the walkway.

>"O-Okay!" She declared behind me.<p>

I heard Hajime sigh quietly as he and Heisuke followed. "Leave it to Kawa to be the missionary, here," he mused.

"I heard that!" I declared.

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I rolled my eyes when the boys " Heisuke and Shinpachi " started arguing over food. Again.

>"Honestly, you two really do act like ten year olds," I muttered, eating a piece of fish from my plate and chewing.<p>

"It's not like you act any different," Hajime pointed out at my left, perking my ears.

I looked up at him, pouting. "What's _that_ supposed to mean?" I asked suspiciously, my fingers gripping the chopsticks rather tightly.

He sipped his drink calmly. "Nothing more than the fact that between you and Okita-san, it's hard to tell who acts more childish." He explained in an aloof tone.

I blushed as I heard Souji cough next to me, seeming to have overheard Hajime. "He starts it; you've seen 'im." I protested indignantly.

>Hajime looked at me with one open blue eye. "Fifty percent of the time, yes," he amended indifferently.<p>

I huffed and looked away, whacking Souji on the back as he tried to swallow his rice. "You can be so mean sometimes, Hajime," I griped sorely.

He seemed to smirk out of the corner of my eye. "That's solely based on your opinion, Kawa." He mused.

>I rolled my eyes.<p>

The door slid open behind us. "Excuse me, everybody," Inoue-san said, making us look to see him looking at us with a slip of paper in hand.

>"I have news from Hijikata-san, from Osaka; it appears Sannan-san has acquired a serious injury." He relayed.<p>

"What happened to Sannan-san?" Shinpachi asked alertly.

>"It's a very severe wound that injured his left arm; it's not so bad that it threatens his life, though." Inoue-san explained.<p>

"Well that's good." Chizuru declared.

>"It ain't good!" Heisuke piped up, confusing her.<p>

"The sword isn't a tool you can manipulate using one hand; maybe he won't be able to use a sword again." Hajime explained.

>She looked concerned for a minute.<p>

"Inoue-san, is my brother alright?" I asked, looking up at the older man.

He nodded and smiled lightly. "Hijikata-san is perfectly fine, Yasakawa-kun. But that's all I have to say, I have to report to Kondou-san." He assured me, leaving the room.

>I sighed a little and smiled. I'm glad, I thought in relief.

"If worse comes to worse, we'll have to use that ****medicine**** on him." Souji mused next to me.

I looked at him alertly. "Souji, don't suggest such a thing! You know

what that'll do to him€ And we can't afford to lose someone like Sannan-san." I declared, lowering my gaze.

"Um, Kawa-chan, what're you talking about?" Chizuru asked, perking my ears.

I looked at her and smiled, waving it away. "It's nothing, Chizu-chan!" I replied; the memory of that night flashed in my mind. I lowered my gaze again. "Yeah, it's nothing." I muttered.

Souji glanced at me, pouring more _sake_ into my cup. I looked up at him and smiled slightly, nodding.

* * *

><p>geesh.. i didn't figure this would be a long first chapter..
O:
>lol well either way, hope you all like reading this.
xD

_edit: **"Bakker0".. i'm not sure if i spelled it right. if anyone finds the correct spelling for it, please message me!
thanks~**_

_feedback is loved, so review please! thanks~ _

2. Rise Again (Conquistador Mix)

A/N: _not much to put here, atm, just that the next chapter will mostly focus on the Ikedaya incident in episode 3 of Hakuouki: Shinsengumi Kitan._
>enjoy!

disclaimer: _i don't Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 02: Rise Again (Conquistador Mix)_

The next day passed by without much difference from the previous one.

>Dinner was, as usual, a comedy fest; but at this point in time, it was a habit to ignore Heisuke and Shinpachi's bickering.<p>

The door to the back hall slid open to reveal my brother.
>"I have returned," he announced to the room as he stepped into the dining room.<p>

"Ah, Toshi," Kondou-san greeted.

"Nii-san, welcome back." I smiled lightly, looking behind him as Sannan-san followed his lead, his left arm in a white sling; I frowned slightly, sipping my soup.

"You both did great, Lieutenant, First Sergeant." Hajime commented.

"Thanks," Toshi replied as he and Sannan-san sat down by

Kondou-san.

"Welcome back, Sannan-san." Souji added lightly.

"It's good to be back." He replied.

"We're glad you're both back home," I chimed.

>Toshi glanced at me and smiled a little; Sannan-san smiled lightly.

"As are we, Yasakawa-kun." He said.<p>

"You both did great out there; how's your arm?" Kondou-san asked Sannan-san.

He seemed to smile sheepishly. "You can see for yourself; I was too careless." He mused, looking around the room at us before he smiled for our benefit. "But I'll be fine! It's not as bad as it looks, so there's no need for concern." He added assuredly, excusing himself from dinner as he straightened and left the dining room.

"But Sannan-san, what about dinner?" Heisuke asked of him.

"I'll pass; I'm a little tired, so I'd like to rest in my quarters." He replied, closing the door behind his leave.

>I exhaled a little when he left, sipping some sake from my cup.<p>

"Hijikata-san, about Sannan-san's injury, just how bad is it?" Souji asked him.

"I can't say for sureâ€|" He replied, perking up as he noticed the girl was eating with us; he looked at her and scowled. "What're you doing here?" He demanded.

She blinked. "Huh?" She asked.

"Who gave you permission to leave your room and come eat with us?" He asked.

She looked away.

>"Umâ€|" She began.<p>

"Uh, Toshi, Iâ€|" Kondou-san smiled sheepishly.

"It was my idea." I declared, slightly surprising the boys; I looked at my brother and met his gaze. "She looked so lonely, eating in her room without anyone to talk with, so I felt like she should come with us because it's warmer here and she wouldn't be alone." I explained, lying effortlessly to him.

>Toshi scowled at me. "Youâ€|" He began to scold.<p>

"I invited her to eat with us." Heisuke piped up.

"No, I did!" Shinpachi chimed.

"No, I did." Inoue-san admitted.

"I invited her." Sano declared.

He looked at us in disbelief.

>"I can't believe you lot. I could expect this from my half-sister,

but not all of you as well." He admitted.<p>

"C'mon, it's only at mealtimes! Chizuru promised she wouldn't run away and she's kept that promise for half a month already." Heisuke declared.

"It's only been two weeks!" Toshi barked.

"If you're so worried about her, why don't you watch her? Stick to her like glue." Souji commented.

>He scowled at him; he looked at him and smiled.<p>

"Toshi, what d'you say; why don't you give her permission to dine with us?" Kondou-san asked.

"Kondou-san, if you're too lenient, the men will start to question your authority." Toshi remarked.

I clapped my hands and looked at my brother pleadingly. "Please, nii-san? We won't do anythin' stupid again, honest!" I wagered.

He looked at me in slight surprise that I had wagered such a thing.

>"Um, I'll go back to my room and eat thereâ€|" Chizuru began to leave.<p>

"Only at mealtimes." Toshi agreed, surprising her; she looked at him as he smiled a little in her direction.

"Thank you, nii-san!" I declared, smiling lightly.

He looked away. "I guess I'll eat something, as well." He mused.

>"I'll go get you a tray," Inoue-san declared, leaving the room to fetch my brother some food.<p>

* * *

><p>She looked over at him with a determined look in her brown eyes.<p>

I waved him off. "Ignore this idiot and just do it, will you?" I declared, ignoring the look he shot in my direction as I sat down opposite him.

She nodded, looking at Hajime.

>"If you don't want to fight with the sword, use the blunt side of the blade." He instructed her.<p>

Chizuru nodded, drawing her wakizashi out and shifting it so the blunt side was up and the sharp side was down. "Let's do this!" She declared.

Hajime nodded slightly, waiting for her to strike first.

She gave a short battle cry before lunging; he moved faster than her, drawing his katana and aiming the blade at her throat when she least expected it after knocking the short sword from her hands.

>I smiled slightly and nodded. Still the fastest, I thought.

"W-what just happened?" Chizuru asked in confusion.

Souji lifted her wakizashi.

>"Surprised? Hajime-kun's a master at drawing his sword." He declared, holding her sword in hand.<p>

She looked to see that she'd had her sword knocked out of her hand. "H-he moved so quick!" She declared in awe.

"You'd be dead if Hajime-kun took it serious." He added, giving her the wakizashi back.

"Be proud of your sensei; your sword was not unclouded." Hajime commented. "At the very least, you won't get in our way if we can take you out with us." He added, walking away.

>"Hajime-kun gave the 'okay'; that's pretty amazing." Souji mused lightly as he followed him.<p>

I straightened and yawned, stretching my arms. "If y'want, Chizu-chan, I'll go with you, when you go with the boys." I offered.

She looked at me. "Huh?" She asked in confusion.

"I thought Hijikata-san didn't allow you on patrol," Hajime pointed out.

"Not with your patrol squad; he gave me the okay to go with Souji." I shrugged innocently, looking at the girl again. "Us girls have to stick together, right?" I wondered, meeting her brown eyes.

Chizuru blinked before she nodded, smiling at me. "Yeah, you're right. Thank you, Kawa-chan!" She declared, bowing slightly.

>I smiled and waved it off. "No problem." I shrugged.<p>

The guys weren't the only ones capable of wielding a sword.

* * *

><p>He ribbed me gently. "Oi, you're wearin' the *haori* I gave you." He mused.

I looked up at him and huffed, crossing my arms at my chest. "Shut up, it's standard uniform." I replied.

Souji chuckled and lifted a hand to run it through my hair. "That shade of blue looks best on you; it matches your eyes." He mused, perking my ears.

I blushed humbly and shooed his hand off, looking away. "Idiot." I muttered, looking up as Chizuru finished asking a man about her father and headed off to a shop named Masuya.

He looked at her and made to go, perking up as we both noticed the men from his squad starting an argument with some ronin; I sighed and pat his shoulder. "I'll get her, you deal with the ronin." I declared, sprinting after the girl.

"Careful, princess," he called after me; I blushed and huffed. "Shut

up." I called back.

I ran after the girl and entered the shop in time to see a man about to cut her down; my hand flew to the _katana_ at my right hip as I blocked him, defending the girl.

"K-Kawa-chan!" She declared behind me.

I looked at the man and grinned. "Picking on innocent girls, huh? How pathetic!" I shoved his weight off, throwing him back as I gripped the hilt of my _katana_ in both hands, hearing the girl scramble away.

The man glowered at me, his friends behind him seeming pissed as well. "You bitch!" He flew at me; I swerved out of the way, my right foot propelling into his back as I kicked him down, seeing him get knocked out.

I huffed. "Too easy." I muttered, perking up as another man flew at me out of the corner of my eye.

>"Look out!" Chizuru barked.<p>

A metallic '_klang_' rang out in the air behind me; I winced slightly, looking over my shoulder.

"Souji," I began quietly.

He disarmed the man, looking back at us. "You seriously don't have good luck; either one of you." He declared lightly. "Of course, that goes for all of us." He mused.

I made a face and huffed, looking up as the rest of the men from his squad came in and arrested the ronin.

>"Idiot," I muttered, sheathing my
katana.

.....oOo.....

"â€|You were Okita-kun and Yasakawa-kun's responsibility." Sannan-san declared.

I frowned at him. "Sannan-san, she's just a girlâ€|" I began to protest.

"Actually, it's my fault for letting her go." My brother's voice declared before he entered the room from the back hallway.

"Nii-san," I began quietly.

"Please don't drown them in shame," Toshi added as he closed the door behind his entrance and came to sit down next to Sannan-san and Kondou-san.

"Hijikata-san, did you get anything out of Furutaka?" Sano wondered.

He looked at us before answering. "They'll set fire to Kyoto on a windy day. In the chaos, they'll kidnap the Emperor and take him to Choshuu."

I scowled at the threat and crossed my arms over my chest. "Set fire to the capital?" I wondered.

"Burn down Kyoto!?" Kondou-san balked.

"Can you believe they wanna kidnap the Emperor? They act like they respect him, but I sure don't see it!" Heisuke piped up.

"Those Choshuu freaks must be nuts if they're serious about burning down the capital." Sano declared.

"They're panicking since we arrested Furutaka. I imagine they'll hold a meeting tonight to come up with a back-up plan." Toshi relented grimly.

>"Where do the Choshuu meet?" Kondou-san demanded.<p>

"Going by their usual pattern, I believe they'll meet at Shikokuya or Ikedaya." One of the investigators, Shimada-san, informed.

Kondou-san nodded. "Got it; inform the Aizu Clan about this as well. Toshi, gather up the men." He declared, looking at my brother.
>He nodded.<p>

As soon as the meeting dispersed, I grabbed his sleeve.
>He looked at me. "What is it?" He asked.<p>

I looked up at him before bowing humbly. "Nii-san, please allow me to go with you to stop these bastards. I won't get in your way, and I'll defend myselfâ€|" I requested.

"I didn't say you _weren't_ allowed." He stated, perking my ears; I looked up at him surprisedly.

"Toshi," I began quietly, straightening.

Toshi nodded and smiled slightly. "If I know anything, I can count on the fact that a woman as stubborn and brave as you would wish to join the fray. You will go with Souji and Kondou-san, and don't get in over your head. Am I understood?" He requested.

I felt a smile stretch across my face before I nodded vigorously. "_Hai_; thank you, Toshi-nii!" I declared, throwing my arms around his neck.

He caught me in time, seeming to smile as he held me gently before letting me go. "You're welcome. Now get ready, go on." He declared, ruffling my hair.

I nodded again. "Right," I replied, hurrying out of the meeting room and sprinting to get my things.

* * *

><p>AN**: _i apologize for this chapter being shorter than the first one. there's a few action scenes in the next chapter so bear with me until then. _
>feedback is loved, so _**review**__ please! thanks~ _

3. Me Protecting You Protecting Me

A/N: _yay, the first fight scene! lol i'm kinda nervous about this one, but at the same time i hope you all enjoy reading it! and if you've got any helpful critiques regarding fight scenes, post it in a review, yeah? thanks, and enjoy the chapter!_

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 03: Me Protecting You Protecting Me_

He looked at us with a determined fire in his eyes. "We're out of options; we'll go in on our own!" He proclaimed.

The boys smiled at him; I nodded and huffed, looking at the entrance to the inn.

"Kawa," Souji said, perking my ears; I looked up at him. "What is it?" I asked quietly.

>He smiled and ran a hand through my hair that I'd pulled back into a ponytail. "Stay at my back, okay?" He requested.<p>

I nodded. "Right!" I said, smiling back.

Adrenaline seemed to course through my veins as we rushed the door and threw it open; finally, I was free to prove that men weren't the only ones capable of wielding a sword, that women weren't as weak as they always believed we were.

"We are the Shinsengumi, who serve under the Lord of the Aizu Clan!" Kondou-san announced; the rushing of footsteps on wood sounded upstairs before at least ten or so men appeared on the second floor landing.

I drew my _katana_ and felt like I couldn't wipe the grin that made my lips twitch upward. _This should be fun_, I thought.

"By imperial decree, everyone is hereby under arrest; we will not hold back on those who resist arrest!" Kondou-san proclaimed to the group of pissed-looking ronin that stared us down.

Several of them drew their blades and charged us.

****Kill them**!**" He commanded.

Souji winked at me before he flew forward into the fray; I followed at his heels, ducking a swipe for my head and stabbing the bastard in the heart, kicking his body away as blood flew and stained the blade of my _katana_.

Two more men flew at Souji from behind; I grunted and slammed into one of them, my sword stabbing the heart of the second one before I pulled the blade out and flicked it so the blood fell off the _katana_.

He nodded at me and smiled. "As quick as ever," he mused, slicing the

chest of the one I'd rammed into, making him fall back as blood flew from his wound.

I huffed and smiled back. "Shut up and watch your back, Okita-kun," I teased, ducking a man as he charged me, my leg swinging out and knocking his knees from beneath him, making him fall.
>My *katana* stabbed into his forehead; I yanked the blade out, panting slightly and wiping a smudge of blood from my chin.
Bastard, I thought.

"Kawa," he yanked on my _haori_ and pulled me out of the way as he thrust his blade into the belly of a stray ronin, his foot propelling into the man's chest and kicking him away as he pulled his _katana_ free.

I nodded. "Thanks," I shoved him away as another ronin flew at him from the side, my _katana_ clashing with his own, sparks flying in the air when our blades met.

The man glowered at me. "Yer just a woman," he sneered, disengaging the blades.

I dodged the would-be blow to the head, swinging my blade to the left of his ribs and cutting him; he sputtered and fell over. I flicked my wrist, his blood flying onto the floor.
>"A *woman* and a _**samurai**_." I spat on his body, following Souji as Heisuke cleared a path up the flight of stairs.

"H-hey, Kawa!" He barked behind me.

"Hurry up, Todou-kun!" I called lightly, hearing him race after me.

* * *

><p>He reached to grab my scruff. "Kawa, I want you to cover my back this time, for real." He instructed, looking at me with hard green eyes.<p>

I stared into his jade-colored eyes and nodded.
>"I will." I replied, smiling for him; Okita Souji may have been a letch, an idiot, and an arrogant man, but he was a captain of the Shinsengumi|<p>

And he was my best friend.

He nodded before he, Heisuke, and myself stepped into the room; my eyes widened slightly.
>Two men stood near the balcony window, looking out at the fight in the backyard with unamused eyes.<p>

The taller of the two, a red-haired behemoth wearing dark blue garb, looked over at us and straightened.

Souji lifted his _katana_ slightly, Heisuke doing the same as I gripped the handle of my own blade reflexively.
>My eyes flew to the second man, the blonde wearing a white *kosode* underneath a gold-embroidered _haori_, and my grip tightened.

Whoever these two men were, they seemed like they would have better things to do than stay up here watching the action below them; and there was one more thing.

Whoever or whatever they were, they didn't seemâ€¦
human.

Heisuke flying at the taller of the two jerked me from my reverie; I widened my eyes slightly. "Heisuke!" I declared, watching the giant knock him back and lift both hands as if he was egging him on.

"You're a monster!" Heisuke spat.

"That's enough; I have no need to fight you." The man declared, lifting a hand in surrender.
>I flew at him from the side; he caught my blade, slightly surprising me.<p>

He looked down at me with emotionless blue eyes. "A woman wearing the garb of the Shinsengumi. What on earth is a woman doing among your ranks?" He wondered in a low voice.

I kicked his ribs, making him back away, as I gathered my katana and glowered up at him. "I don't have to answer to a cheap sack of shit like you." I growled, spitting at his feet.

The man seemed amused for a moment. "I do not wish to fight with you either, woman. Were I you, I'd stop while I was ahead." He advised, placing his hand up in surrender again.

I looked at him in confusion. I'd never met an enemy that was willing to remain peaceful and not draw his weapon; this was a first.

"What d'ya mean by that?" Heisuke demanded near me, stirring me from my thoughts.
>"There's no need for me to take either of your lives if you pull back now." The man explained.<p>

He smirked. "Sorry, but there's reason enough to stay. I'm not gonna let a Choshuu bastard like you get away!" He stated, rushing him.

"Heisuke, waitâ€¦!" I declared, widening my eyes slightly when the man caught his blade before it struck, his left hand reaching to grasp the blade tight.

The man seemed sad. "I do not care to be considered one of the Choshuu Clan." He declared; he yanked the katana out of his hand, surprising him, before he hit his belly and tensed his stance as his second fist crashed into his forehead.

"Heisuke!" I barked when he flew back, crashing into one of the walls behind me.

The man turned to leave through the balcony.
>"H-hold onâ€¦!" Heisuke growled before he quieted as the man left the scene.<p>

"Damn it," I grumbled, rushing to the boy's side and checking him.

"Heisuke, are you alright?" I asked, shaking him.

He opened one eye up at me.

>"K-Kawaâ€| help Soujiâ€|" He managed before knocking out again.<p>

I clucked my tongue and nodded, straightening from his side to see if I could help Souji.

.....oOo.....

"Souji," I declared as I found him fighting the blonde man.

He lunged at the man, narrowly dodging a swipe for his face; he glanced over at me standing in the doorway. "Stay back, Kawa," he ordered, grunting and lunging again.

I widened my eyes slightly. "Souji," I began concernedly.

He lunged at the man, his blade missing his chest and being caught under the man's armpit; he propelled his right foot into Souji's chest, sending him back.

He panted slightly, glaring at the man, before he hacked and covered his mouth with his hand; I widened my eyes alertly as blood appeared from between his fingers.

Drops of blood fell to the floor beneath him.

"_Souji_!" I exclaimed, gripping the handle of my _katana_ as I made to go to his side.

"**S-stay back, Yasakawa**!" Souji ordered through another cough, spitting out more blood.

I widened my eyes again at his usage of my full name; he'd only ever used that name if he was serious. "But," I began.

"**That's an order**!" He snapped, hacking more blood.

I flinched, taking a step back as I gripped my _katana_ tighter, looking down to see my knuckles were white.

>He was wheezing and panting at the same time as he faced down against the blonde, glaring into his smug gaze.<p>

A rushing of feet sounded behind me; I turned in time to see Chizuru coming forward. "Chizuru?" I said in surprise.

>She looked up at me.
"Kawa-chan," she replied, making to go into the room; I grabbed a fistful of her _kosode_ and yanked her back to stand next to me, extending my arm out. "Don't go in there. Souji, heâ€| he wants to fight this man alone." I instructed.

Her eyes widened. "But Okita-san is..." She began worriedly.

"**_I_****_know_**", Chizuru. Please, don't get into this." I added softly, glaring at the scene of seeing my friend wheezing and panting as his own blood stained his face and parts of his clothes as well as the floor he stood on.

She quieted and followed my gaze. "_Hai_," she amended softly.

Souji lunged, missing as the man swerved out of the way, swinging his blade down and grazing his right arm.

>"Okita-san!" Chizuru exclaimed; the man looked up at the sound of her voice.<p>

Souji moved out of the corner of his eye, lunging and thrusting his _katana_ forward; he caught his attack, holding his own _katana_ upside-down vertically, surprising him as well as me.

"Is that the best you've got?" The man sneered; he slammed into him, throwing him back against the wall.

>"Okita-san!" Chizuru barked as he started coughing again.<p>

I flew in to defend him, baring my _katana_ threateningly as I glowered up at the man, locking gaze with his red eyes.

>"K-Kawa," Souji croaked behind me.<p>

"Touch him again and I'll rip you apart." I spat coldly, clenching my teeth.

The man smirked as he looked me up and down.

>"How cute, a human whore defending the one she loves." He mused in a low tone, raising his katana.

I growled under my breath and lunged at him.

"**No**!" I heard Souji shout behind me as the man dodged my attack, his blade swinging at my back.

>I turned in time to block him, sparks flying when our blades met.<p>

He seemed momentarily surprised before he smirked again and bore his weight down on the _katana_ in his hands, trying to back me into the wall.

I grinded my teeth together and forced him back, digging my heels into the floor beneath me and glowering up at him.

He stared into my eyes. "For a woman, you're pretty good." He mused.

I smirked darkly up at him and growled as I shoved him away roughly, lowering my _katana_.

>"I wasn't aware bastards like you knew a thing about flatteries." I sneered, gripping the hilt and swinging the blade at him.<p>

He dodged each swipe with ease, only further pissing me off, bringing his blade to block mine for the final swing; I panted, seeing him smirk.

>"What's so funny, the prospect of dying at the hand of a woman?" I wondered snidely.<p>

His left foot propelled outward and connected with my gut; I yelped slightly as I flew back, landing against the wall hard.

"Kawa-chan!" The girl exclaimed in the distance as the man neared me, his _katana_ pointed at my throat.

>He glanced over at her.
"Are you their friend? I'll kill you if

you get in my way." He vowed, looking at me. "As to your question, the prospect of a weak whore like you dying at the hands of someone like me is what's really amusing." He growled.

I glared up at him blearily, panting softly. "Go to hell." I spat coldly.

He lowered the blade; a loud metallic 'klang' rang out.
>I widened my eyes.<p>

He stood in front of me, panting slightly, his _katana_ blocking the man's own blade.
>"Souji." I breathed his name in awe.<p>

"Get up." He ordered; I obeyed and gingerly got to my feet, gripping my _katana_ tightly.

"I'm your opponent, remember? I'd really appreciate it if you didn't touch either one of these women." Souji declared with a cold undertone, extending his free arm to block me from moving away.

>"You're a fool; you couldn't even serve as a shield to protect her." The man sneered.<p>

"I'm not totally useless yet!" Souji snarled as he lunged.

"Don't; you're coughing up blood!" Chizuru declared as I grabbed the back of his _haori_ and held onto him tightly with my right hand.

>"Souji, please," I begged.<p>

The man huffed quietly and sheathed his _katana_.
>"What gives?" Souji spat.<p>

"My job ended the second you got here." He replied.

I perked my ears as I heard a familiar sound coming from downstairs: silence.
>Did they stop fighting? I wondered.

"Wait!" He barked, stirring me from my thoughts; I looked up to see the man leaving through the balcony like the other man did earlier.

>He staggered as he tried to chase the man, falling down.
"Souji!" I hurried to his side, kneeling next to him.

"Damn it! I can't! I can still fight!" Souji managed, coughing before he let his head droop down onto the floor.

"Okita-san!" Chizuru exclaimed as she rushed to his other side.
>I looked down at him and frowned at the blood, looking at her.
"Get my brother. Chizuru, go." I ordered, meeting her brown eyes.

She nodded. "_H-hai_." She turned to sprint out of the room.
>I looked down at him again and sighed, gingerly brushing strands of hair from his face. "Idiot," I muttered.<p>

A rushing of footsteps sounded behind me. "***Kawa**!" I looked up at the sound of that voice, meeting the cool blue eyes of Saitou

Hajime.

My shoulders slumped. "Hajime, you're all right." I beamed in relief, watching him come forward to kneel next to Souji's side.

>He met my gaze and nodded.
"Are you alright?" He asked, concern
"and maybe even worry" shining in his blue stare.

I returned the nod and brushed some hair back from my face, smiling.
"Yeah, I'm alright." I replied.

Hajime looked down at Souji and exhaled. "It's a miracle he's not dead." He mused.

>I nodded and looked down at him.
"I know. He's such an idiot, acting so cocky." I replied, feeling his eyes on me; I looked up to meet his gaze, the knowledge that he was caught staring at me seeming to register in his mind. "What is it?" I asked quietly.

He looked down and at the blood staining the floor a few feet away.
"The moonlight, it makes you look beautiful." He admitted, his voice softened in his shyness.

I felt my cheeks warm and lowered my gaze, smiling humbly. "Acting romantic in a bloodied place like Ikedaya? Bold, Saitou-kun, bold." I mused teasingly.

Hajime's cheeks burned a darker shade of pink before he looked away again. "I don't know why I ever talked to you," he muttered.

>I couldn't help but giggle. "Because you were curious." I mused, perking his ears; he looked at me.<p>

"How did you figure that?" He wondered.

I shrugged, feeling my cheeks warm up again.

>"I kind of have a knack for reading people's expressions." I replied. "I know, it sounds really weird" Forget I ever said that." I muttered, looking away embarrassedly.<p>

"No," he replied; I looked up at him from behind black lashes. He smiled softly. "It's cute." He paused for the right word, his cheeks coloring pink.

>I looked down as my own cheeks burned. "Thank you." I cleared my throat and shook my head.<p>

A rushing of feet sounded coming to the room; Hajime straightened to his feet as Toshi, Chizuru, and a few men came in with a stretcher.

>"Kawa," Toshi began at seeing me with blood stains on my
haori and clothes and face.

I shook my head. "I'm alright. It's Souji," I replied assuredly, looking down at my friend.

>He quieted at seeing the younger man unconscious before he nodded to the men with the stretcher. "Take him back to headquarters." He ordered them.<p>

"_Hai_, _Fukutaichou_," they replied, moving forward towards him.

>I straightened and moved to stand next to Hajime as the men lifted Souji onto the stretcher (which, in retrospect wasn't actually a stretcher, it was a large piece of door that'd probably been knocked

down at the start of the raid), rubbing my right arm gingerly.<p>

Hajime grabbed my hand, slightly surprising me; I looked at him confusedly, seeing him lift my hand and meet my gaze. "I just want to look." He explained quietly.

I nodded, letting him pull my sleeve up to see a few cuts were on my arm; I looked away humbly when I felt my brother's gaze bore into my skull as he inspected the cuts.

I heard my brother sigh quietly when the men carried Souji away.

>"You're just as reckless as ever." He mused, perking my ears; I looked at him to see he was staring at me, referring to my actions.
He smirked softly and nodded. "But thank you, for not getting yourself killed." He added.

I nodded back and smiled sheepishly. "No problem, nii-san." I replied.

Toshi turned to follow the men out, Chizuru glancing back at me before she followed him.

I watched them leave and sighed. "I'm starting to really dislike ronin." I muttered.

>Hajime chuckled softly.<p>

I ribbed him. "What's so funny?" I wondered.

He met my gaze and looked amused.

>"If I didn't know any better, I'd swear that I was listening to a clone of Hijikata-san." He mused.<p>

I blushed before I lifted a hand to scritch the back of my head. "Geez, don't lump me together with my brother. He's a thousand times worse than me." I protested.

Hajime shook his head knowingly and took my good hand. "Let's go." He said, meeting my gaze.

I blushed again and nodded, squeezing his fingers reflexively as he dragged me out of the room and downstairs to where the rest of our company was waiting.

* * *

><p>A quiet exhale escaped me as I knocked on his door.<p>

"Who's there?" He replied; I didn't expect him to be awake.

I smiled and slid the door open, seeing him looking up at me from polishing his katana. "Guess who," I replied lightly.

>Souji's eyes softened and he smiled. "Well, there's a gorgeous face I haven't seen in a while," he mused lightly.

I rolled my eyes and left his door opened, sitting down at his side. "Idiot, it's only been a few hours since the meeting." I pointed out.

>He chuckled and smirked at me. "I knew that," he mused.<p>

I huffed. "_Riight_", I muttered.

He looked at my right arm to see it was still bandaged. "How's your arm?" He asked, his voice softened.

>I blinked and then looked down at it, rubbing my wrist.
"It's okay, it's better than it was before I took nii-san's shitty medicine." I mused with a shudder at the horrid taste.

He laughed, smirking at me. "It doesn't taste ****that**** bad," he offered lightly.

I rolled my eyes and folded my arms over my chest. "Says you." I quipped.

>Souji chuckled, smiling at me.<p>

I returned the smile, looking at the red fabric on his _katana_ absently.

>"I forgot to thank you, for saving my neck, back at Ikedaya." I mused, bowing my head humbly.<p>

He shifted a little before I felt his fingers lift my chin up; I blushed, meeting his green eyes as I could almost see the revulsion toward my almost-death and anger that he didn't protect me.

He smiled bitterly. "You're the most brave woman I've ever met, y'know that? Even though you were mere seconds away from getting killed by a piece of shit like that man." He almost growled the last bit.

I shuddered slightly, gently removing his hand from my chin to hold it in my own, looking down at his larger hand clasped in my smaller ones. "Souji," I began quietly.

His free hand brushed locks of hair from my face. "Iâ€¦ I dunno, what I woulda done, if you'd died that night." He admitted, his voice lowered at the end of his sentence.

I shook my head. "You would've gone on with life, like everyone else does. I was never meant to be here, when Toshi first brought me with him. I couldn't do anything to stop that man from hurting you, at Ikedayaâ€¦" I began annoyedly.

He sighed exasperatedly; his hand slipped out of mine and reached for my waist, yanking me forward to land in his lap.

>I blushed brightly, feeling him hold me close to his chest as his chin rested on my shoulder.<p>

He curled his fingers in my hair.

>"Yer such an idiot. What happened for you to land here with us is in the past: the fact of the matter is that you're here, you have family and friendsâ€¦ You have people that love you, that would rip apart each and every bastard that tried to lay a finger on ya. I swear to you that the next time someone tries to hurt you, I'll protect you, Kawa." He vowed sternly.<p>

I listened to his words and nodded; I had never heard him sound so stern and serious about anything in my time spent living with the Shinsengumi.

>My fingers dug into his shoulders and I rested my cheek against his

neck. "Thank you, Souji." I whispered.<p>

He seemed to laugh softly at my words, holding me close. "Don't mention it." He replied quietly.

I gingerly pulled out of his lap, blushing a little. "Me landing in your lap was part of your plan, wasn't it?" I wondered, looking at him knowingly.

>Souji looked at me with one open green eye.
"I haven't the slightest damn idea what yer talking about, princess." He said lightly.

THWACK.

"Sure you don't, **_sure_**!" I declared, straightening to my feet and dusting my _hakama_ off.

He rubbed his nose gingerly, using two fingers to tweak it back into place; he grimaced.

>"Geez, you've got a hell of a sucker punch." He grumbled, his voice sounding nasal because of his slightly broken nose.

I fought a grin at his expense.

>"I wouldn't be able to live here with you idiots if I didn't have a good right hook." I mused, walking to the door.<p>

"Kawa." He spoke behind me; I looked over at him to see he was smirking despite a slight smudge of blood under his nose.

"The next time I have ya in my lap, I'm not letting you get away." He warned slyly with a wink.

I felt my cheeks heat up; I spluttered a huff, clenching my fists.

"You're such a letch." I scolded.

>He shrugged innocently.
"Can you really blame me? Yer the most gorgeous woman I've ever met." He said lightly.

I felt my face heat up further. "Pervert, keep it in your pants." I snapped.

Souji chuckled and grinned up at me, reminding me of a cat. "Just go, before I keep ya here for good." He teased with a casual wave of his hand.

I huffed and stormed away down the walkway back to my room, cursing him to Hell for his perverted thoughts.

* * *

><p>AN: _great chapter, right? lol incase anyone is wondering about the chap. title from ch.2, _**YES I BOUGHT THE NEW 30STM ALBUM. AND I LOVE IT**_. nah but srsly i love that song, "_**Conquistador**_". : 'D listening to it as we speak.. lol_

_also, sorry if it seems like i'm trolling Kawa with Souji; i love them both, but Kawa is meant for someone else this time around. you'll find out at the end of the fic~ ;D

>

>feedback is loved so review please! thanks~

4. Honor at the Cost of Diversification

A/N: _not much to put, but i think this's the last chapter for now. there's more to come in this story, but i need to go through my reference for the next chapters. bear with me til then, yeah? enjoy!_

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 04: Honor at the Cost of Diversification_

"Kawa," I perked an ear to see Hajime looking at me.

"Hajime," I nodded as he came to stand at my side.

He looked at me again. "Hijikata-san said you would do best if the both of us were in the same group." He declared.

>I lifted a brow.
"I'm surprised nii-san said that. But okay, I'd be honored to be grouped with you." I smiled lightly.

He returned the smile and nodded. "Come on, let's move." He declared, leading the way down the path.

>I smiled again. "Right," I sprinted after him until we were side-by-side.<p>

Part of me felt bad because I thought back to what Souji said, a month ago. But the other part of me was happy to fight alongside Hajime.

>If it came down to it, which one would I love? Which one could I love more?<p>

Hajime was stoic and determined, but beneath that façade he showed to the world, he was gentle and caring.

Souji was confident and funny, and beneath that front, he was kind and protective.

>I loved Souji as my best friend. That's really all he was to me, at this point in the time I'd known him.<p>

But Hajime— did I love him?

I mentally huffed.

>I'm just deluding myself, I thought.

::::::::::::oOo::::::::::::

"Rubbish; the Satsuma Clan's already protecting it!" An outcry sounded from the gate.

I lifted a hand to scratch the back of my head in frustration.

"Sheesh, they sound worse than a pack of barking dogs." I muttered as I walked at Hajime's right.

He looked at me and chuckled softly. "Took the words right out of my mouth." He mused.

>I looked up at him and smirked.<p>

"If anything happens, stay at my back." He instructed, perking my ears.

I nodded. "_Hai_, Saitou-_taichou_." I added the last bit with a wink.

>He smiled rather proudly at my words.<p>

One of the men seemed to notice us coming forward. "What's this: aren't those your Shinsengumi friends?" He wondered, referring to the Aizu Clan. "I can't believe you let those low-ranking losers join your ranks. The Aizu hasta be full of a bunch of cowards; ya can't even fight without some lame-ass ronin helping you." He declared.

My hand flew to the hilt of my _katana_. "You cheapâ€¦!" I began to snarl, anger starting to boil in my blood at hearing a lowly Satsuma dog insult my friends.

>His hand closed over mine, halting me. "Easy." He whispered; I blushed and lowered my gaze.<p>

"Don't listen to his crap." He addressed the rest of the men. "Just do your jobs; focus on our mission to confirm the situation."

"_Hai_," one of the other men muttered.

A sweatdrop formed on my brow as one of the Aizu men started to draw his blade at another insult; _geez, these Aizu guys are worse than us when it comes to biting at the bit_, I thought.

>The Satsuma soldier that'd insulted him made to draw his own blade were it not for a large hand staying his own, surprising him.<p>

The large hand belonged to a familiar red-haired giant with icy blue eyes; he stood in front of the Satsuma platoon, staring down the Aizu soldiers.

I widened my eyes alertly.

>That manâ€¦! Memories from the Ikedaya incident flashed in my mind; I grabbed Hajime's hand.<p>

He looked at me, glancing at the giant. "What is it?" He asked quietly.

>I glared at the giant.
"I remember him. He was at Ikedaya." I replied softly.

"So you're my opponent!" The Aizu soldier that'd started to draw his blade lunged at the giant.

"No!" I exclaimed, perking up when Hajime disappeared from my side to stop him in time.

>"Enough; there's too much of a gap between you." He warned the man; he seemed to regain his senses and looked bewilderedly at Hajime.<p>

"I'm sorry for the trouble we caused at Ikedaya." The giant apologized, surprising Hajime. "Is the injury on his forehead healing nicely?" He asked, indicating Heisuke.

I drew my _katana_, walking forward to stand at Hajime's side. "He's

doing fine." I answered stiffly.

>He looked at me. "Kawa," he began; I shot him a look, glaring up at the giant.<p>

He seemed to recognize me. "I must apologize for frightening you, that night." He said almost in lament.

I scoffed and gripped the hilt of my blade.

>"Who said anythin' about me being scared? The only one who shoulda been scared was that bastard that hurt my friend." I snapped coldly, referring to Souji as the memory of when he'd sworn to protect me flashing in my mind's eye.<p>

The man looked sorry. "I apologize for that, as well; my friendâ€ he doesn't know when to stop when he meets a challenge like your friend." He admitted.

>I huffed and lowered my gaze.<p>

Hajime seemed to smirk. "So you're the one who defeated Todou?" He wondered, perking my ears.

I looked at him. _Whatever you do, don't take this guy on_, I mentally prayed.

The familiar metallic '_shink_' of a blade being drawn sounded, jerking me from my thoughts; I looked up alertly to see him pointing his blade at the man's throat.

>"The Shinsengumi has a bone to pick with you; I see you as the object of Todou's vengeance." Hajime declared coldly.<p>

"Hajime," I began. If he could beat Heisuke into a coma, I didn't want to imagine what he could do to someone of Hajime's size and skill..!

"But at the moment, I have no reason to fight against the Shinsengumi." The man replied, perking my ears.

They stared at each other, reminiscent of two wolves staring each other down over dominance.

"Hajime," I grabbed the back of his _haori_, looking at him concernedly.

"I have no intention of causing trouble right now. After all, our goals are the same. But if you continue to insult us, we and the Aizu Clan will have to take action." Hajime stated.

"It is true that we started the fight," the man said, slightly bowing his head in apology. "I shall apologize on behalf of the Satsuma Clan."

Hajime lowered his blade and sheathed it.

>"I had also wanted to avoid a fight; I am grateful you pulled back." The man bowed slightly. "My name is Amagiri Kyuuju. I pray that we will be in a situation where we can help one another the next time we meet." He introduced.<p>

We both watched as he turned to leave, creating a path between the Satsuma soldiers.

I sheathed my _katana_, looking away as I felt his eyes on me.

>"Kawa," he began.<p>

FWHACK.

>Some of the men sounded surprised.<p>

He backed away slightly, looking at me with wide eyes as a red mark appeared on his right cheek.

***IDIOT**! Those bastards killed off our men and made us look like spineless dogs. What honor is there in letting the same bastards slip away with their tails between their legs!?" I shouted, glowering at his surprised blue eyes.

He quieted and looked away.

>I clenched my teeth and gripped the hilt of my katana before sprinting down the street.

***Kawa**!" He shouted behind me.

I kept running, feeling angered and cheated and like I wanted to throttle him for acting like that.

Damn it, Hajime!

* * *

><p>I was the first one back to headquarters.<p>

Thankfully, noone heckled me when I walked past the gate, just the standard formality.

>"Welcome back, Yasakawa-kun!" The two guards declared lightly.
I smiled for them, faintly, before nodding. "Good to be back." I replied, walking past them to slip my shoes off and start off down the walkway.

As I reached my room, I stopped short of going inside and instead I sat down on the walkway, dangling my legs over the wooden edge.

>I lifted a hand to rip my headband off, looking down at it in my hand and thinking of Hajime.<p>

"Jerk," I muttered as I dropped it onto the wooden surface, scowling out at the closed-in courtyard.

>A soft breeze tugged at my hair; I exhaled quietly.<p>

"This is a first, you're back early." A voice declared near me; I perked up and looked to meet the familiar green gaze of Okita Souji.

I smiled slightly and looked at the courtyard again. "You heard I came back before the others, then." It wasn't a question.

He nodded, coming to sit down at my right. "Yep." He looked at me out of the corner of my eye. "You alright?" He asked.

>I quieted and kicked my legs in the air absently. "Not really." I replied softly, inhaling and telling him about the issue at the 5th Gate, about how I'd slapped Hajime.<p>

He gave a low whistle when I finished telling him the story, relaxing

and resting his katana in his lap. "He musta really pissed you off, for you to slap him like that." He mused.

I nodded and rubbed my right arm gingerly. "Yeah, and now I feel bad about it. Hajime, he was just trying to be the peacemaker. I feel like an idiotic bitch for doing that to him." I smiled bitterly.

Souji quieted next to me; I stirred when he lifted a hand to tuck a few strands of hair behind my ear, looking up at his green eyes.

He sighed.

>"Yer not a bitch, Kawa. If anything, you're a woman who was pissed off and hurt. It's not as bad as you think it is, so stop blamin' yourself." He stated, his green eyes resembling jade stones.<p>

I blushed and lowered my gaze to my feet, nodding. "Y'think so?" I wondered.

He seemed to roll his eyes before he cuffed me over the head; I winced, rubbing my head gingerly. "Owâ€|" I muttered.

"Idiot, of course I think so! I wouldn't be chasin' you if ya were as big of a bitch as you claim ya are." Souji barked, perking my ears.

I looked up at him and felt myself smile before I closed my eyes and sighed. "You're still an idiot," I pointed out with a quiet huff.

He chuckled quietly before he pulled me into a hug; I blushed slightly and smiled, hugging him.

>"Not as big of an idiot as you are sometimes, princess." He remarked.<p>

I rested my cheek on his shoulder, shaking my head. "Shut up," I grumbled.

>Souji seemed to grin gently as his arm at my waist squeezed.

"Whatever you say, princess." He sighed.
I huffed and pouted.

"Welcome back, taichou!" I distantly heard the guards say.

I looked up alertly. "Hajime," I mused, gently getting away from his arms to get to my feet.

Souji looked up at me with a sore look before he sighed and straightened too. "Go on," he urged, smirking at me.

I threw my arms around his neck and hugged him tightly before letting go. "Thanks, Souji." I smiled, turning to sprint away down the pathway.

WHAM.

My head was kind of spinning.

>I rubbed my head gingerly, grimacing. "Owâ€|" I muttered; geez, my head could NOT get a break today!

"Watch where you're going," a familiar voice scolded.

I looked up to see Saitou Hajime sitting up from having crashed into me, also rubbing his head.

>He looked at me and his eyes saddened a little before he straightened, extending his hand to me.<p>

I took his hand, letting him help me stand; I pulled my hand free to bow humbly before him.

>"I'm sorry I slapped you, and kind of embarrassed you in front of the others." I apologized, keeping my eyes downward.<p>

Hajime was quiet for a minute before he inhaled. "You had every right to be angry, Kawa. Just don't run off like that again." He replied, perking my ears.

I looked up at him past locks of black hair that got in the way.

"R-really?" I wondered.

>He nodded, watching me straighten. "Yes, really." He lifted a hand to rub his cheek gingerly. "Though I have to admit, that did hurt." He mused.

I felt my cheeks warm and I bowed my head. "I'm sorry; Iâ€¦ I had no right to hit you, especially in front of your own squad." I declared humbly.

>He moved forward to place a hand on my head, slightly surprising me; he sighed quietly and ran his fingers through my hair.
"It's all right. Like I said, just don't do it again." He requested.

I lifted my head as his hand slipped to cup my cheek. "Right." I nodded.

Hajime looked at me and his blue eyes seemed to soften, his fingers caressing my cheek. "That shade of blue really does suit you." He mused.

>I blushed again and smiled humbly, holding his hand to my cheek. "Idiot," I muttered in shyness.<p>

He chuckled.

* * *

><p>AN: _yes, more trolling. i was never really familiar with the term until a few months back so i apologize if i've done it in the past with other fics. /bows apologetically

>

>question to my readersreviewers**__: who do you really think Kawa should be with? _

feedback is loved, so review please. thanks~

(**edit**: fixed this chapter. i didn't realize the last paragraph was all clumped together.)

5. Pale Oracle of Indigo

A/N: _and so enters the day where Itou Kashitarou steps on to the scene. will he unite both his faction and Kondou-san's? or will he make it crumble like a broken mirror? enjoy the chapter!

^^_

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 05: Pale Oracle of Indigo_

"â€|So he has the same belief as those Choshuu dogs?"

I poked my head past Souji. "Who're you talking about?" I wondered.

Souji seemed to smirk at me. "Itou Kashitarou; surprised ya haven't heard of him, before." He replied.

I looked up at him and smirked back. "No, all I really know is that he's the head of a dojo in Edo. Although now that I look at him, he makes my old sensei look like a monkey." I muttered the last bit.

He snorted as Shinpachi and Sano snickered. "I wonder if we'll get along okayâ€|" Sano mused.

"Itou-san is highly educated and a skilled orator." A voice declared behind us; I looked to see it was Sannan-san.

"Hey, Sannan-san, were you two friendsâ€|?" Sano asked, perking up as he disappeared down the hall.

>I frowned. "I wonder what's eating him." I mused.<p>

"Sannan-san's been real distant lately." Shinpachi chimed.

>"Yeah, he hardly ever talks with us anymore; of course, he was never much of a talker to begin with." Sano agreed with a frown.<p>

I sighed.

>Even though I'd only been with the Shinsengumi for over a year, I knew that dissention among the ranks was a bad sign; if Sannan-san were to go away or die in battle, we'd lose not only our Deputy Commander, but we'd lose a vital part of the group.<p>

Poor Sannan-_san_, I thought.

* * *

><p>"What're you saying, Itou-san!?" Toshi's voice breached past the rather flimsy barrier the shoji door provided.

I opened my eyes half-way, looking up as Chizuru had appeared with a tray of tea in her hands.

She looked down at me. "Kawa-chan, what're you doing?" She asked.

I shook my head, jerking a thumb to the door.

>"â€|But he's invaluable to the Shinsengumi as a swordsman!" He snapped.<p>

I smiled to myself at his words, exhaling a little.

>Typical Toshi, sticking up for the rest of us. But then again, he wouldn't be the Vice-Commander if he didn't, would he?<p>

"Dear me, I believed I said too much." Itou-san seemed apologetic. "I hope your arm gets better!" He added.

My nose wrinkled as my fingers tightened on the sheath of my katana. I kept poised in my lap; he didn't sound apologetic so much as he did sarcastic.

"Bastard," I muttered, perking up as the door slid open to reveal Sannan-san.
>I straightened to my feet, looking at him concernedly as he looked between Chizuru and myself.<p>

"They don't need a first sergeant now that they have a gifted military advisor." He mused, walking past Chizuru down the walkway.

"Sannan-san," I began quietly, lowering my gaze before looking into the room to see the guys looking at where Sannan-san had left; I met my brother's pissy violet gaze.

"Were you eavesdropping the whole time?" Toshi demanded, perking my ears.

I looked away humbly before nodding.
>"Part of it." I replied, slightly sheepish.<p>

"Hijikata-san, I don't believe I've had the pleasure of making thisâ€| woman's acquaintance." Itou-san piped up, making us both look over at him.

I frowned at him and crossed my arms over my chest. "Hijikata Yasakawa." I introduced stiffly.

He seemed to look me up and down before a serene smile formed on his smooth face. "'Hijikata'? Hijikata-san, I wasn't aware you had a sister!" He declared in surprise.

Toshi glowered at him. "Half-sister." He replied in a likewise stiff tone.

Souji glanced between Itou-san and me, I noticed; his hand reflexively lifted to the hilt of his katana positioned in his lap.

Itou-san looked to me again. "You never mentioned she was so lovely." He mused lightly.

I bristled; not as girly as ****you****, you bastard, I thought.

>"I'm flattered, Itou-san. It must be rare for you to see a woman in the same living space as so many men." I declared, reluctantly swallowing the insult dying to come out into the tense air as my fingers tightened their grip on my katana.<p>

Toshi looked up at me, seeming surprised that I was acting polite; but being the smart man I knew he was, he could probably smell the distaste I aimed towards Itou Kashitarou.

I forced a smile and bowed slightly. "If you'll excuse me," I declared, leaving the doorway to walk past Chizuru.

My feet picked up the pace as I sprinted away to keep myself from

saying something I would regret later.

.....oOo.....

The dying sun looked like a pinkish orange.

I looked up as I passed by the front steps of the building to see Souji, Hajime, Sano, Shinpachi, Toshi and Chizuru gathered there.

Souji was the first to acknowledge me; he smiled. "You okay?" He asked.

>I nodded, walking forward to sit next to him on the steps. "I've been better." I replied.<p>

He seemed to look down. "I don't like him either; but I'll admit, he's good with a sword." He mused.

I huffed. "If he ever uses it; he's too frilly to even break a nail." I mused bitingly.

"I don't trust him." Toshi declared.

"Then send him away, Hijikata-san. Tell him the Shinsengumi don't need rubbish like him." Souji said.

"Nii-san, what good is he if he's just acting like a snobby nobleman and heckling the rest of us?" I asked, looking at my brother.

>"There's no way Kondou-san would approve; he absolutely adores Itou-san." He replied in distaste.<p>

I huffed again. "He really is a slick piece of shit, winning over Kondou-san like that." I spat.

He glanced over at me, a smirk on his lips. "It's a shame you didn't say that earlier, when he was running his mouth." He mused in lament.

I met his gaze and laughed quietly, returning the smirk. "Well, I figured ya would've chewed me out for insulting him in front of Kondou-san." I shrugged innocently.

He huffed and looked away. "That doesn't mean I wouldn't have been proud to hear my own blood talk that way to a bastard like Itou-san." He declared.

I widened my eyes slightly before smiling. "In that case, I'll go insult him right now," I mused lightly, hopping to my feet.

"E-eh?" He balked. "Wait, Kawaâ€¦!" He began.

"Oi, you're not goin' anywhere, princess," Souji declared as he grabbed my hand and pulled me down to sit with him.

>I pouted up at him. "Awww, you're no fun!" I griped.<p>

He rolled his eyes and cuffed me gently. "Yer not goin' anywhere near him, not after earlier. It'd be a damn shame if he was the one to cut you down before ya could even lay a finger on him." He advised.

I huffed and jerked my hand free, crossing my arms at my chest. "Yer so mean, Souji," I mumbled.

Souji sighed and ruffled my hair. "You'll thank me one day for that," he replied.

>I huffed again.<p>

"Saitou-san, do you dislike Itou-san too?" Chizuru wondered, perking my ears.

He glanced over at me before looking down. "A group grows and expands when people with various ideas gather together. But it will fall apart from the inside out if you force diversification." He replied.

I nodded slightly, thinking about Kondou-san and frowning slightly.

Was that was he was doing, forcing diversification on us?

* * *

><p>Sunlight glinted off the blade of my katana.

>I swung it from one side, lifting it in the air and swinging it down.<p>

It was spring, but the air wasn't balmy and sticky to the point where I could tell summer was coming.

"My goodness, you seem to be swinging that sword with such a scary face!" A voice declared behind me; I looked over my shoulder to meet the indigo eyes of Itou-san; I lowered the _katana_, scowling. "I was concentrating." I excused myself.

Itou-san smiled lightly. "I can tell." He replied.

>I sheathed my katana, turning to face him. "Is there something I can help you with, Itou-san?" I asked bluntly, raising a brow.

He appeared to take on that sly fox expression he often wore around us. "Apparently being around men for an extended amount of time as you've been has made you sound just like them." He mused.

I bristled a little. "Well forgive me if I don't sound like the whores at Shimabara." I returned coolly.

Itou-san laughed a little, taking a step closer to me. "The better question is, do you work like the said whores in Shimabara?" He wondered, a dangerous glint appearing in his eyes.

I clenched my fists, glowering up at him. "I'd rather rot in hell than ever be forced to please a man like you." I growled, spitting at his face.

He grabbed my right wrist, the serene expression faltering.

>"If you weren't related to that brute, you'd be nothing less than a piece of meat men use for their selfish needs." He snapped frostily, using his free hand to wipe the spittle from his cheek.<p>

I clenched my teeth, trying to jerk my wrist free. "Bastard, don't ever talk about my brother that way!" I shouted.

A pale hand smacked him away from my wrist before a figure in black stepped between us; I widened my eyes slightly. "Hajime," I began in surprise.

He looked at Itou-san stonily. "You must forgive Yasakawa-san, Itou-san; she hasn't had a great week." He excused me calmly despite the angered vibe I was feeling from his body.

Itou-san smiled smoothly at him. "That would explain things. Brash women like her should hold their tongues more often." He mused lightly, throwing a glance at me before he turned to walk away from the courtyard and back to his quarters.

We both sighed in relief when he left; he turned to look at me.

"I saw him grab your wrist. Are you alright?" Hajime asked concernedly.
>I blushed and nodded, rubbing my arm gingerly. "I'm fine. Thank you, for stepping in." I replied, smiling sheepishly at him.<p>

He nodded, looking over his shoulder at where Itou-san stood minutes ago, a frown crossing his face. "He had no right to behave that way with you. As he claims to be a samurai, he should learn to treat women better." He mused, looking at me, his blue eyes meeting my gray; a small smile formed on his lips.
>"Especially moreso if he's misbehaving around a woman who'd cut his tongue off faster than he could blink." He added.<p>

I felt my cheeks warm again, looking down. "That's not the only thing I'd cut off." I grumbled.

Hajime chuckled softly. "That doesn't surprise me to hear that coming from you." He mused.

I looked up at him and smiled. "Aww, I'm touched, Haji-kun," I said, making him wince at the pet-name I'd bestowed to him when we first met.
>He cleared his throat and looked away. "Honestly, must you call me that?" He grumbled.<p>

I laughed quietly and smiled again, lifting a hand to stroke his cheek. "You look more handsome when you blush." I mused quietly.

>His cheeks burned a darker shade of pink before he cut his gaze to the side. "Kawa," he muttered.<p>

I shook my head knowingly and kissed his cheek, releasing his face of my hand. "Yeah?" I wondered.

He looked at me, slightly bewildered, before he smiled in reluctant defeat. "You're impossible." He said.

I pursed my lips and huffed dramatically. "Is that the thanks I get for bein' nice to you? Geez, I'm hurt, Haji-kun!" I declared, starting to walk off.

He seemed to roll his eyes and sigh. "If you weren't so dramatic, I

wouldn't have said you were impossible. Not that I'm intending to lie about it." He remarked as he followed me onto the walkway.

I pouted at him and cut my gaze to the side, scritching the back of my head in frustration. "Yer so mean, Hajime," I griped.
>He chuckled. "Only with you, Kawa." He replied, seeming pleased.<p>

I huffed, blushing still.

* * *

><p>A slight yawn escaped me.<p>

Hajime glanced at me as I stood to his left. "You sound bored." He mused.

>I shrugged and smiled sheepishly. "Kind of, yeah." I said.<p>

"If you're that bored, go check on Chizuru. Stretch your legs for a bit." Sano suggested, perking my ears.

>I looked at him and then looked at Hajime. "I'll be back." I replied, nodding before I sprinted after the girl's path.<p>

Hopefully Kondou-san didn't allow Itou-san to mess anything up, while they were talking with the Shogun. Or rather, I hoped _Toshi_ would cut his tongue out if Itou-san said anything stupid.

" Women are very valuable. Come with us." A familiar low voice sounded as I neared the corner where the girl had turned.

>I widened my eyes alertly.<p>

That voice ! Memories from the night at Ikedaya flashed in my mind, particularly of that blonde man that'd hurt Souji .

My fingers reached for the hilt of my _katana_ before I picked up the pace and flew around the corner in time to see Chizuru being cornered by the same blonde man from Ikedaya.

"Get away from her." I snarled as I skidded to a halt in front of the girl, _katana_ drawn and bared defensively, making the blonde back away.

"Kawa-chan," Chizuru began in relief behind me.

The blonde scoffed. "***You** again." He declared, his red eyes gleaming in the moonlight.

"Yo, Kazama, you know that bitch?" One of the two men behind him " I could easily recognize the behemoth Amagiri on the left " asked from his perch atop one of the high brick gates.

The blonde Kazama glanced back at his comrade before he scoffed again. "She was at Ikedaya. But she's nothing more than a cheap whore wielding a blade." He replied coolly.

I bristled. "Your name's Kazama, huh? Mighty name for a shit-face like you." I spat.

He sneered. "Mind your place, woman. This is between us _oni_." He

advised coldly.

I raised a brow. "'_Oni_'? Isn't that a bit far-fetched, considering yourself an _oni_? My brother told me about the run-in with you on the way to find those Choshuu at the mountain, but the word '_oni_' doesn't match what he described." I wondered.

Kazama scoffed. "If you continue to get in my way I'll show you the power of an _oni_." He threatened.

I grinned darkly. "Is **that** right?" I asked in a low tone.

"Kawa-chan, don't!" Chizuru barked behind me as I gripped my _katana_.

The familiar '_klang_' of metal clashing rang in my ears; I widened my eyes slightly.

* * *

><p>AN: **_CLIFFHANGER_**. **_dun_**. **_dun_**. **_DUN_**!_ _rofl _

>nah but srsly, slight action scene in the next chapter so look forward to that!

>
feedback is loved, so review please~ thanks! /bows_

also, more trolling in the next chapter. just a head's up. ^^

6. A Thousand Times I Fought For Truth

A/N****: _the conclusion to the cliffhanger awaits! enjoy the chap. ^^_

disclaimer: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 06: A Thousand Times I Fought For Truth_

"Whoa, there; you're messed up if you're trying to pick up a girl in a creepy place like this." A familiar light voice declared.

I perked up at seeing two figures standing between Chizuru and me and Kazama and Amagiri. "Sano, Hajime," I declared in slight relief.

"You again? I see you country dogs have sharp tongues." Kazama mused, rather pissy.

>"The same goes for you." Hajime spat coldly.<p>

"Harada-san, Saitou-san!" Chizuru declared in relief.

I looked over my shoulder to see my brother's familiar gaze meet mine. "Nii-san," I said in surprise.

>"Fall back, both of you." He instructed, indicating Chizuru and me.<p>

I nodded, extending an arm in front of the girl reflexively as he stepped forward.

>"At first I thought you were here for the Shogun's head; what do you want from this girl?" Toshi demanded coldly.<p>

"I don't care about you or the Shogunate at the moment. This is a problem between us _oni_." Kazama answered.

"'_Oni_'?" He repeated in disbelief.

"Would you please pull back? Just as it was at Kinmon, I have no reason to fight you." Amagiri spoke up, referring to Hajime.

"How ironic; I have plenty of reason to fight you." Hajime spat; I blushed slightly as I felt like he was mostly referring to the threat to my well-being.

"Then it can't be helped." Amagiri replied rather gravely, leaping onto one of the lower walls.

>"Stay with the girl," Hajime whispered before he followed the giant.<p>

"Hajime!" I began, perking up as Sano split up and hopped the low-rising wall yards away to fight with the third "_oni_", seeing Yamazaki-san shield the girl as it was just Kazama and my brother on the ground.

"Stop pretending to be warriors!" Kazama raised his _katana_.

"**No**!" I exclaimed, being shoved out of the way as Toshi's blade clashed with his own; I widened my eyes slightly. "Toshi," I breathed.

"Kawa, stay out of this." Toshi snapped at me.

I quieted and nodded. "Hai, nii-san." I replied, grabbing the girl by the arm and leading her away.

"But Kawa-chanâ€¦!" She began.

"I told you before, Chizu-chan. Don't get into this." I interjected patiently, meeting her worried brown gaze; I smiled slightly.

The sound of hurrying footsteps sounded coming from the main building.

"Any more fighting is meaningless; we'll merely attract attention if we drag this out." Amagiri noted.

>Kazama leaped onto the same wall the third "oni" stood on. "There's no need to stay since our suspicions have been confirmed." He mused.

"I won't let you slink away!" Hajime flew at Amagiri.

>He disappeared from in front of him, reappearing atop one of the other walls, surprising him; I widened my eyes slightly. That's impossible, I thought.

"We'll come for you again; count on it." Kazama warned the girl before they fled into the darkness.

The girl leaned forward; I caught her in time, supporting her against my shoulder. "Chizuru, are you okay?" Sano asked as he came forward.

>"Hey, do you have any idea why they're after you?" Toshi's voice cut across us, his question directed at the dizzy girl.<p>

She came to and shook her head, looking down. "Noâ€¦ I'm not really sure," she replied quietly.

>I looked at her and then looked up at my brother. "Nii-san, leave her alone, please. She's weary." I pleaded, meeting his violet eyes.<p>

He held my stare before cutting his gaze to the side. "Fine." He grumbled.

>I nodded slightly and looked at the girl again.<p>

Chizuruâ€¦ Are you really an oni? I wondered.

* * *

><p>She washed the squash again.<p>

I ran a hand through my hair. "You doing alright today, Chizu-chan?" I wondered.

She looked up at me and nodded, smiling slightly. "Hai, I am. Thanks for asking, Kawa-chan." She replied.

>I smiled lightly. "No problem." I shrugged, lifting a hand to rub behind my neck.<p>

Chizuru, if you are an oni, why do you deny your heritage? I wondered, frowning softly.

"Um, is something wrong, Kawa-chan?" Her voice stirred my thoughts.

I blinked and saw that she was looking up at me confusedly; I waved it away absently, "no, nothing's wrong! I'm fine."

>She quieted and nodded, smiling slightly again.<p>

"Well okay, if you say soâ€¦" She mused, quieting as we both looked up to see Itou-san walking past us, mumbling to himself about something he found annoying (which might've been anything, considering how he acted around us).

"Itou-san?" Chizuru asked, stirring him from his thoughts; he looked over at us. "Is something the matter?" She wondered.

"Of course something's the matter! Some doctor called Matsumoto tried taking off my clothes during the physical exam!" Itou-san barked, shuddering and hugging his arms.

"Was his name Dr. Matsumoto Ryoujin!?" She asked alertly after thinking about it for a moment.

>He seemed thoughtful. "That might've been his nameâ€¦" He mused.<p>

"I'll go take a peek at the physical exams!" Chizuru exclaimed as she jumped up and ran off to the main temple.

"E-eh? Chizuru!" I barked, sprinting after her.
>Geez, why was she this worked up for a physical?<p>

We skidded to a halt at the main doors to the temple.

"_**EH**__!?" I balked.

All of the men were shirtless, standing in line to get themselves examined by the bald man sitting at the front of the line.
>So that's Dr. Matsumoto, I thought, letting my gaze wander over to Shinpachi as he went to the front of the line, flashing off his toned arms and chest.

Even though I should've been blushing, I only rolled my eyes at his show; _honestly, Shinpatsu_, I thought with a sigh.

"You're supposed to get _examined_ at a physical, not show off; outta the way." Hajime spoke behind him, stirring my attention away from the complaining captain; my cheeks burned as I looked at his pale torso, at the muscles on his arms and slim belly.

I tore my gaze away and coughed, refusing to look at him again.
"Geezâ€¦!" I grumbled.

Both Shinpachi and Sano flexed their muscles, showing off at each other.

>I rolled my eyes. "Geez," I muttered, perking up as Chizuru started giggling at my side; I looked at her and smiled softly.<p>

"What possessed ****you**** to spy on the physical exams?" A voice wondered, perking my ears.

I looked up to meet the cool blue stare of Saitou Hajime; my eyes briefly flickered down at his naked torso and I blushed heavily, spluttering a huff and looking away.
>"I-it wasn't my idea, Chizuru heard Dr. Matsumoto was here and I followed her in here," I defended indignantly.<p>

Hajime seemed to smile, stepping closer to me, folding his arms at his bare chest. "A-huh, of course it was. Considering you're very outspoken the majority of the time you're around me, this is the first time I've seen you speechless." He mused, his tone rather smug.

I felt my face heat up at his smug tone and huffed again, glowering up at him from beneath black lashes. "Do you _want_ me to slap you again?" I wondered cattily.

He chuckled and shook his head, dropping one arm to cup my cheek. "Ease your grip on that _katana_, warrior princess." He advised, sounding like he was teasing.

I blushed again and looked away from his pleased and amused blue stare. "S-shut up." I growled.

Hajime grinned softly and released my cheek to favor running his hand through my hair. "Your hair looks interesting in that topknot." He mused.

I met his blue gaze and saw that he looked gentle; a shiver rolled down my spine. "Idiot." I grumbled in defeat.

"Yo, check it out, Sano; it looks like Saitou-san has finally softened up to our sword princess!" Shinpachi exclaimed loudly behind him, making us pull apart.

Hajime's face flushed as I glowered over at Shinpachi's smug grin that seemed glued to his face.

>"Honestly, Nagakura-sanâ€|" He grumbled embarrassedly.<p>

THWACK.

"**OW**!" Shinpachi yelped when my foot connected with his head.

"_Bakker_, that's what ya get for bein' a pervert!" I snapped annoyedly, glaring at him as he rubbed the mark that appeared where my foot had landed.

Sano sweatdropped. "Geez, Kawa-chan, that was some kickâ€|" He said admiringly, helping Shinpachi to his feet.

I huffed and crossed my arms at my chest.

>"I wouldn't be able to survive around here if I wasn't able to kick any idiot's ass, would I?" I quipped.<p>

Hajime sighed patiently.

* * *

><p>He poured more sake into my cup.<p>

I looked up at him from sipping my cup, still rather confused as to why he was doing this. "So to what do I owe the honor of havin' you bring sake to me?" I wondered.

He smirked slightly at me from taking a sip of his own cup. "Geez, yer bein' suspicious today, Kawa-chan," he said lightly.

I made a face, downing the rest of my cup before putting it down on the floor. "Would you cut the crap and just spit it out? I know you, Souji; I know when you're trying to hide something from me." I demanded, scowling up into his green eyes.

The faint rosiness on his cheeks seemed to fade when we locked gaze; he exhaled, putting his cup down. "Matsumoto-sensei said somethin' about me having tuberculosis." He said, trying to sound like his usual jovial self.

I widened my eyes slightly. "But that'sâ€|" I began quietly.

"Yeah, the disease that doesn't give ya much time to live by. That one." He seemed to quiet down after the last bit.

I looked down at my empty cup and felt my hair fall down my shoulder, acting as a veil to shield me from his eyes.

>Tuberculosis; I'd heard of that disease. It was probably one of the worst diseases in this day and age.<p>

****_And Souji had it_**.**

My hands shook a little as I faintly felt the sting of tears prick at the corners of my eyes.

Why Souji? What the hell did he do to deserve such a horrible sentence?

"Kawa, say something." I heard him speak softly, his voice sounding like it was coming from a mile away.
>I shook my head.<p>

He seemed to frown, because he reached to grasp my hands in his larger ones; I looked down at our intertwined hands and saw that mine were shaking.

"Kawa," he said quietly, seeming to be aching for me to say something, to say anything.

Hot tears slowly slipped down my cheeks; he released my hands of one to tilt my chin upward, holding my chin in his thumb and index finger's gentle grip.

Pain flickered across his face at seeing me crying; he clucked his tongue and lowered his gaze minutely before lifting it back up to meet my tear-filled eyes with bitter green eyes.

I shook my chin free of his grip before I scowled sternly up at him. "Don't do anything stupid. Justâ€¦ don't get yourself killed, okay? Please, Souji." I croaked, my throat feeling dry and cracked.

Souji quieted and nodded, looking at me. A faint wry smirk formed on his lips. "Geez, you've got me promisin' to not wield a blade ever again. That sounds more like Hijikata-san than you, Kawa-chan." He mused.

I spluttered a huff and wiped the tears away, frowning softly. "Well he is my brother," I quipped.

He rolled his eyes and looked down at my hands, holding them in his own again. "You okay now?" He asked quietly.
>I nodded and smiled for him. "Never better."<p>

Souji frowned at that and gently pulled me into his arms; I blushed slightly before I heard him chuckle softly.
>"You've never really good at lyin' to me. I've always been able to see right through ya." He pointed out, his fingers running through my hair and cradling the back of my head.<p>

I blushed again and dug my fingers into his shoulders, burying my face into his neck. "Am I really that see-through?" I wondered softly.

He seemed to chuckle again. "You always are to me. But you're beautiful that way." He mused.

I felt my cheeks warm up at his words before I sighed. "Letch," I muttered.

Souji sounded like he smiled. "Just with you, princess." He said lightly.

I pulled away reluctantly to roll my eyes at his pet-name he'd given me, huffing.

>"Honestly, leave it to you to act like an idiot and ruin a tender moment." I mused.<p>

He made a face, making me laugh quietly; he cuffed me gently, ruffling my hair. "Well that obviously makes two of us that run our mouths," he said.

I scrambled away and pouted up at him.

Souji laughed and planted his hand on my head, tousling my hair again. "Kawa, I'm not goin' anywhere just yet, okay? I'm still gonna keep my promise." He reminded stubbornly, his green eyes turning like jade again.

I lowered my gaze and nodded, smiling up at him. "I believe you; I trust you, Souji." I replied quietly.

He nodded back and removed his hand from my hair, taking the sake bottle and straightening to his feet, slinging the bottle over his shoulder as he went to the door. "In that case, I'll leave you be for the night." He paused short of stepping out into the dusk and looked at me; he smiled. "Don't worry about me. I'm still gonna be around to make ya laugh." He assured me.

I nodded slightly and smiled at him. "I'm glad for that." I said.

Souji's green eyes softened. "G'night, princess." He said, turning to leave and close my door behind his exit.

* * *

><p>AN: _sorry there wasn't much action in this chap. ^^; i intend to put some action scenes into later chapters, so don't fret, yeah?_

>also, to put things into perspective here, Kawa sees Souji as her best friend, and hearing that he has tuberculosis makes her only worry more for his life. the HajimeKawa ship is still sailing though! i've just been trolling them and again, i apologize for that..
^^_
_

anywho, you guys know the drill; review please. thanks~

7. Kill With Love

A/N:_another short chapter, sorry guys. not much else to put here other than that. enjoy!_

disclaimer:_ i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 07: Kill With Love_

I sweatdropped as she came to dry his hair. "Seriously, Chizu-chan," I muttered.

He glanced over at me from between a wince. "Don't get jealous over there, princess," he teased.

I huffed and crossed my arms at my chest. "As if. Yer free to choose whoever the hell ya want to be with, dummy." I reminded.

>Souji chuckled, wincing. "Ow, Chizuru-chan!" He whined.<p>

I giggled and smirked gently, leaning back into the railing. "Heh; serves you right." I mused.

>He pouted over at me; I laughed.<p>

"That's enough, it's dry enough already." He shooed her away gently, placing the towel around his shoulders.

>She blushed slightly and smiled sheepishly as he fixed his hair back into the messy topknot he usually wore.<p>

"Tell me, what do you think of my hairstyle?" He asked her.

>Her brown eyes softened. "It looks great." She smiled.<p>

He smiled. "Really? Great, thanks. Well, what d'ya think, Kawa-chan?" He asked, looking at me.

>I blinked and then smiled gently.
"Shaggy as always, but shaggy suits you. You look more handsome like that." I mused.

Souji blinked before he coughed, blushing slightly. "Y'really think that?" He guessed.

>I nodded. "Definitely." I smiled lightly.<p>

He turned to the girl, "I'm actually trying to copy Kondou-san's hairstyle." He said.

>"It does look like Kondou-san's, doesn't it?" Chizuru guessed lightly.<p>

I smiled softly at him.

Ever since I'd gotten to know Souji more, I noticed that he was copying Kondou-san's topknot hairstyle. From what Toshi had told me, he treated Kondou-san like an older brother. Kondou-san had taken him in when he was little, and from then on I supposed they looked out for each other like blood brothers.

He poked my forehead. "Oi, what're ya smilin' at?" He wondered, perking my ears.

>I blushed, shooing his hand away. "Nothin' of your concern, dummy." I replied, crossing my arms at my chest.<p>

Souji smiled and sighed, ruffling my hair. "Whatever ya say, princess," he mused.

* * *

><p>The geisha Kimigiku smiled lightly. "Please enjoy yourselves." She said.<p>

"She's beautiful," I heard Chizuru muse quietly; she glanced her way and the girl quieted, nodding.

>I chuckled softly and smiled at the girl, ruffling her

hair.<p>

"Kawa-chan, you drink up too! Sano's treating after all!" Shinpachi exclaimed lightly, perking my ears.

>I looked over at him and Heisuke downing sake and rolled my eyes, smirking. "I will, you two drink first." I waved them off.<p>

Souji chuckled at my right. "Afraid you'd get just as hammered as they do?" He wondered.

I blushed slightly and huffed, poking his belly with the end of my chopstick. "Not even close! Nii-san may not drink, but that doesn't mean I can't handle a few shots." I quipped with another smirk.

>He pouted slightly when I poked him, rubbing his belly gingerly. "Ya never change, Kawa-chan," he mused with a sigh.<p>

"Hey, Sano, why'd you let them go?" Shinpachi's voice perked my ears; I looked up at Sano.

Why did they escape anyway? I wondered.

>All the Shinsengumi were required to do was guard that stupid bulletin board, and the Choshuu had tried to ambush Sano's patrol squad. So why they got away when he could've easily killed them all was a mystery.<p>

"I thought that was strange, too; you even managed to catch some of them." Heisuke chimed.

His gold eyes rounded on the girl. "Chizuru, did you go out anywhere that night?" He asked.

She blinked. "No." She replied.

"You sure?" He insisted.

>She nodded. "Yeah; I don't leave headquarters at night." She said.<p>

"So what's the big deal, Sano?" Shinpachi asked.

His gold eyes hardened slightly. "Actually, a girl who looked like Chizuru got in our way when we were apprehending those Tosa Clan guys. Then everything fell out of formation." He explained darkly.

>"That's horrible!" Chizuru declared.<p>

I frowned slightly; a girl that looked like Chizuru?

"Maybe it's that girl you met while conducting rounds with Heisuke." Souji said, looking at her.

"You saw her?" I asked slowly, looking at him.

>"Wasn't her name Nagumo Kaoru? She looked just like you." He added, ignoring me.<p>

"But that's not enough evidence," she mused, looking down.

I ribbed him. "It must've been her, then; Chizuru wouldn't do something stupid like help anyone affiliated with Choshuu." I defended, scowling into his green eyes.

"I didn't really think so; after all, she was dressed like a girl." Heisuke chimed.

>"Why don't we put her in a kimono to confirm it?" Hajime spoke up, perking my ears.<p>

"Huh?" She balked, looking from Souji to Hajime to Heisuke to Sano and Shinpachi.

"Dress Chizuru up!" Heisuke barked as he hopped to his feet.

"That's it; that's a great idea! Hey, you; sorry, but could you dress this kid up as a girl?" Shinpachi chimed as he stood up and looked over at the geisha named Kimigiku.

"**EH**?" Chizuru squeaked.

"Now, hang on!" Toshi began to get to his feet before the woman placed a hand up to stop him.

She seemed to smile. "Very well; I accept your request." She said lightly; the blush on his face from the strong drink seemed to deepen at the ludicrous idea.

I smiled lightly. "In that case, come on, Chizu-chan!" I declared, lifting her to her feet and dragging her to the door leading to the back hallway as Kimigiku slid it open and ushered the girl into the dark hall.

"W-wait, Kawa-chan!" Chizuru yelped before I gently pushed her out of the room, closing the door behind her and the geisha.

>I sighed and dusted my hands off. "That's better," I mused, walking back to where I was sitting.<p>

"Oi, maybe we should have Kawa-chan dress up too," Souji mused lightly next to me; I spat out my sake, coughing.

"**Hell no**!" Hajime and Toshi snapped in unison as they jumped to their feet, surprising the boys; Hajime cleared his throat and sat back down, becoming very interested in his food.

"Over my dead body you're forcing **both** of them to wear a kimono!" Toshi barked, throwing Souji a death glare (I noticed Hajime also shot a cold glare in his direction from sitting closest to my brother).

Souji laughed lightly and smirked at his pissy face. "It was just a joke, Hijikata-san!" He said nonchalantly.

THWACK.

"Just a joke, huh?" I wondered as I cracked my knuckles.

>He rubbed the large bump on his head gingerly. "Well, when you say it like that!" He began.<p>

THWACK.

I sipped my sake. "Got anything else to add to that?" I wondered.

He munched on his rice. "No, ma'am," he replied sorely, seeming to ignore the pain at having twin large bumps swell and look like a pair

of panda ears.

I smiled lightly behind my cup. "Good." I mused.

Hajime handed me the bottle.

>I met his blue eyes and saw a smug smirk playing at the corner of his lips, amusement written across his face; I smiled gently at him and offered my cup.<p>

It was another ten minutes later before we heard the door slide open.

"Sorry for the wait, everyone." Kimigiku's voice said as we looked at the girl dressed in a red kimono in awe.

"Chizu-chan," I said before smiling lightly. "You look beautiful!" I declared kindly.

"H-hey, are you really Chizuru?" Heisuke stammered.

>She nodded. "Y-yeah," she replied.<p>

Souji smiled. "What a transformation; I didn't think it was you, in there." He said.

"So, what do you think, Sano?" Hajime wondered.

>He looked thoughtful. "I dunno; Chizuru's so pretty I can't decide." He mused.<p>

She blushed.

>"Damn straight; Chizuru's super cute!" Heisuke exclaimed.<p>

"Yeah, Chizuru's a babe!" Shinpachi chimed excitedly.

"What's that, Shinpachi-san; enjoying the eye-candy?" Souji wondered lightly.

I cuffed him. "Idiot, don't you make fun of her too!" I scolded.

>"You jerk, you're makin' me blush!" He barked.<p>

"That's enough!" Chizuru barked, quieting them as she ran out of the room and out to the balcony.

"Ya were way outta line with that last line, Shinpatsu!" Heisuke scolded.

****_THWACK_**.**

>THWACK**.

>THWACK**.

I crossed my arms at my chest and scowled at all three of them.

"Idiots, it was because of all three of ya that she ran out like that!" I scolded them annoyedly.

"Geez, Kawa-chan that hurt!" Heisuke griped as he rubbed the bump on his head gingerly.

"Keep whining and I'll do worse." I vowed, scowling from him to the non-complaining Shinpachi and Sano who had matching bumps on their heads.

"Don't maim them just yet, will you?" Hajime wondered as I felt him place a hand on my shoulder; I looked at him and blushed slightly, lowering my gaze.

"Yeah, I know," I mumbled, reluctantly letting him pull me to sit back down next to Souji.

Souji snickered at seeing the trio be scolded like children, sipping his sake. "Warrior princess indeed," he mused quietly at my side.

I blushed again and pouted up at him, huffing. "Idiot, don't laugh unless you want another beating." I remarked, downing another shot of sake.

* * *

><p>AN: _sorry this chapter is so short, it was a filler episode so i couldn't do much.. ^^;_

you know the drill already. thanks~

8. Don't Back Down, I Hold My Own

A/N: _there is dissention among the ranks and it's about to get worse. also, the trolling comes to an end at last! enjoy._

disclaimer: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 08: Don't Back Down, I Hold My Own**

"He asked if I wanted to join him." Shinpachi declared darkly.

I widened my eyes slightly and huffed, gripping the hilt of my _katana_ absently. "That bastard, I knew there was something wrong about him," I muttered.

"Nagakura-san, how did you reply to him?" Chizuru asked.

"I told 'im, 'because the Shinsengumi allow me to eat all I want, it wouldn't be any fun for me to join you'." He replied.

"The same thing happened to Hajime-kun, right?" Souji said, looking over at the training captain.

I balked. "He asked you the same thing? What did you tell him?" I demanded, remembering that afternoon he'd saved me from getting into any further trouble with the effeminate piece of shit.

"Yeah." He replied as he sheathed his _katana_.

I looked down at my feet, my fingers tightening on the hilt reflexively.

>Was Hajime going to go with Itou-san?<p>

* * *

><p>"Chizuru," I barked as she scrambled to hide behind me,
katana drawn and poised on the head of the Fury.
>His injuries healed up faster than expected; I widened my eyes
slightly.<p>

Did Sannan-san make the medicine better?

"Kawa," Toshi grabbed my scruff and pulled both myself and Chizuru behind his back as the Fury straightened and looked at each of us for blood.

His red eyes rounded on the girl again.

I clenched my teeth as the memory of my first encounter with the Fury flashed in my mind.

The sound of a blade cutting through flesh rang in my ears, jerking me from my reverie; I looked to see the Fury had crashed into the door, blood staining his chest and shoulder.

"Why did he do that?" Heisuke wondered.

"My apologies; I didn't keep a close enough watch on him." Sannan-san said in lament as he came forward.

>"Sannan-kun, what's going on?" Kondou-san asked.<p>

"I'm not sure," he replied, looking down at the felled monster before he looked at Chizuru and myself. "Yukimura-kun, Yasakawa-kun, are you two alright?" He asked.

I nodded, seeing her nod as well. "We're alright." I replied, sheathing my _katana_.

She gripped her bleeding right arm gingerly. "I'm fine," she nodded.

"You're not fine; this much bloodâ€|" He declared as he came forward to place a hand on her arm.

>He stiffened as the blood stained his fingers; he gripped his head as a loud growl escaped him.<p>

Shit!

"Sannan-san, what's wrong?" She asked.

"Keep away from him, Chizuru," Toshi snapped as he pulled her out of the way.

I scrambled to rush to Hajime's side; he pulled me behind him protectively, tensing his stance.

"Damn, even Sannan-san was affected by the scent of blood?" Shinpachi wondered near us as he growled for blood before pain seemed to radiate in his neck.

"Sannan-san," I began quietly, thinking of that late Fury; my fingers gripped Hajime's shoulders reflexively.

Was Sannan-san going to end up just like that Fury?

He seemed to come back to his senses at last, gripping his head gingerly.

>"Sannan-san," Chizuru said hesitantly.<p>

"Yukimura-kunâ€|" He looked at her and then at the dead Fury. "I lost control like himâ€|" He muttered.

"What's all the ruckus about?" A shrill bark sounded outside.

**Shit**. I forgot about him.

"Can one of you please explainâ€| Eh!? S-S-Sannan-san!? Y-you should be d-deadâ€| w-why..!?" Itou-san balked in horror and shock.

"Calm down, Itou-san; it's late. I'll explain it to you in the morning," Kondou-san said, quick to take action, ushering the distraught man away from the scene.

>"How can I be calm!? You owe me a great explanation for this!" Itou-san exclaimed shrilly as they walked away.<p>

"We've been discovered; should we kill him?" Souji asked lightly.

Toshi scowled and then looked at the girl. "You'll sleep in my room tonight; and let Yamazaki bandage that wound for you." He instructed her.

>"I'm alright," she declared.<p>

"You're not; Yamazaki is in charge of medical servicesâ€|" He argued.

"I'm fine; I can take care of it myself!" She snapped indignantly, looking away before hurrying out of the room.

I looked at my brother and shook my head. "Real smooth, _Oni_ Vice Commander." I mused.

>He scowled at me. "Don't start with that," he warned.<p>

I waved him off, following the girl. "Yo, Chizu-chan, wait up." I declared, seeing her pause short of walking away as I came forward.

>"Kawa-chan," she looked down again. "I said I can handle it," she said.<p>

I nodded and walked at her side. "I know you can, I'm just comin' along because Toshi's worried sick." I replied calmly, smiling slightly.

Her cheeks burned as I ushered her into his room. "Y-you think so?" She wondered, watching me pull a strip of cloth from the handkerchief I had in my robes and sat down.

I nodded. "Nii-sanâ€| well, he's not very good at expressing his emotions. But I honestly believe that he was worried for your safety." I shrugged as I helped her dress the wound, tying the strip together. "He's pretty thick-headed most of the time, but when it comes to those he cares about, he always worries and is willing to

put his life on the line. Do you get what I mean?" I explained, meeting her brown eyes.

She seemed to blush again at hearing how my brother was; she nodded, lowering her gaze. "Yeah, I understand." She looked up at me. "But why does he always scold you?" She wondered.

I blinked before chuckling. "Because sometimes being the infamous _Oni_ Vice Commander goes to his head and he think he can boss me around." I mused lightly.

Chizuru laughed softly. "That would explain a lot." She said.

I laughed gently and smiled. "But Toshi, heâ€ he always means well. As I said, he doesn't show his emotions well to people, but there are those times when you can see he's actually a kind man. Y'know, when his ego isn't getting in the way." I mused with a smirk.

She smiled slightly and nodded. "Yeah, that's true. Thanks for helping, Kawa-chan," she replied, looking at me and smiling again.

I returned the nod and lifted a hand to ruffle her hair gently. "No problem. Get some sleep, okay? Otherwise Mr. _Oni_ will have my ass for breakfast for keepin' you up later than you should be," I added with a wink.

Chizuru laughed quietly and smiled. "Okay. G'night, Kawa," she said as I straightened to leave the room.

I looked back at her and smiled lightly. "'Night, Chizu-chan," I replied, opening the door and closing it as I walked back to my room.

* * *

><p>"Such willful behavior can't be tolerated!"<p>

I perked an ear as I looked up with one eye to see Shinpachi was still pissy.

>"I didn't expect that he would move so quickly; damn sneaky bastard." Sano chimed bitterly.<p>

Souji looked at me. "Surprised you haven't said anythin' about Itou-san, Kawa," he mused.

>I shrugged. "I had hoped he'd leave, and apparently my prayer was answered. I was afraid I'd hafta kill him after he came onto me last time." I mused.<p>

He looked at me alertly. "He did ****what****?" He asked, his green eyes widened slightly.

I looked up at him. "He insulted me, and Toshi, and he almost slapped me before Hajime saved my neck." I explained, lowering my gaze when I could feel the anger rising inside him.

Souji huffed and looked away. "That sick bastard," he growled, perking my ears.

I looked at him again, concernedly. "Souji," I began.

>He stepped away from the well to walk off into the courtyard.<p>

I frowned after him and sighed.

"¿Heisuke-kun and Saitou-san?" Chizuru balked behind me, perking my ears.

>I looked back at her to see her brown eyes glanced over at me; I looked away and saw that my hands were shaking.<p>

I clenched my teeth. "I'll see you later, Chizu-chan," I said quietly, sprinting away to go find him.

"Kawa-chan!" She called.

What the hell was he playing at?

Why was he taking Hajime!?

.....oOo.....

My feet skidded to a halt in front of his room; I saw that the door was halfway open and threw it wide open.

>"Hajime!"<p>

He seemed to grimace at the sudden change in lighting, looking up to see me standing in the doorway; his blue eyes hardened. "Kawa," he began.

"Why the hell are you letting Itou-san take you with him?" I demanded, glaring at him.

>I know I didn't tell him that I loved him, but I still felt like I was getting screwed over by this sudden change in rank.<p>

Damn that slippery shit-faced bastard!

He finished polishing his wakizashi, sheathing it. "I was wondering when you would come," he mused quietly.

>My hands balled into fists at my sides and I clenched my teeth.

"Just answer me." I snapped.<p>

He quieted and looked away. "I can't tell you." He replied.

I perked up slightly; my feet moved forward into the room before I grabbed his scruff and looked him in the eye. "Why not?" I demanded.

Hajime was slightly surprised at my aggressive gesture before he removed my hands from his collar, his blue eyes hard. "It's none of your business." He stated.

I scoffed. "It sure as hell sounds like it should be my business." I spat.

He glared slightly at me. "Why does it bother you so much?" He demanded.

I widened my eyes slightly; my cheeks warmed and I looked away. "Because the last thing I'd ever wanna hear is that Itou-san managed to wrap you around his finger and con you into leaving us!" I exclaimed.

Hajime quieted. "Is that the only reason?" He asked, his voice soft.

My cheeks burned and I looked down at the sheathed swords near his leg. "Hajime," I began.

"Is it?" He pressed.

I looked up at him with sharp eyes before my body moved even though I didn't tell it to, my hands finding his cheeks as I kissed him.

He seemed surprised at what I did before I felt his tensed body relax; he curled his fingers in my hair, cradling my head in one hand and gripping my waist in the other, crushing his lips against mine lovingly.

>I blushed as I moaned softly and leaned onto his body, my hands holding onto his strong shoulders.<p>

So this is what a first kiss felt like.

Hajime pulled away reluctantly as I felt the slight sting of tears gather in my eyes; his blue eyes stared at me before he cupped my cheek like he did that day when he saved me from Itou-san, a raw gentleness I hadn't really seen in his eyes shining in his stare.

I felt my cheeks burn again before I shirked out of his grip to throw my arms around his neck; he held me close, his arms holding my waist tightly.

"I don't want to lose you." I admitted softly.

He seemed to smile and ran a hand through my hair. "It's not like I'm going to die out there," he mused.

I huffed.

>"I know, but that doesn't stop me from worryin' over you." I declared, pulling back a little to look at him stubbornly.<p>

Hajime sighed and gingerly kissed my forehead; I blushed, hugging his neck reflexively.

>"You won't lose me, then. I'm going to come back to you." He promised quietly.<p>

I nodded and closed my eyes tight in relief. "I'm glad," I replied.

He tucked a few strands of hair behind my left ear, meeting my gaze; he smiled for me. "You look beautiful, with your hair like that." He mused, referring to the loose ponytail I wore.

I blushed humbly and pursed my lips, pushing his chest gently. "Shut up," I muttered.

Hajime chuckled. "I mean it." He insisted.

>I lowered my gaze and blushed again. "Honestly," I grumbled shyly.<p>

* * *

><p>The mist seemed to settle in even as we fought.<p>

"Nii-san!" I threw my wakizashi at the giant, Amagiri, as he knocked Shinpachi away with a fist.

"Kawa; I told you to stay back!" He barked as I drew my katana and held onto the hilt.

I huffed. "Should know better than that to expect me to listen." I remarked, lunging at the giant.

Amagiri plowed a fist into my stomach; I flew back, digging my heels into the ground and coughing.

>"Yasakawa!" Toshi declared before he lunged at Amagiri, swinging his blade down.<p>

I gripped the hilt of my katana before I sprinted forward, dropping one hand to my right side as I neared the giant, swinging my blade.

>He caught my arm, surprising me; I glowered up into his icy eyes before he tossed me away.<p>

I landed on my side, a grunt of slight pain escaping me as I hit the ground.

"**Bastard**!" My brother shouted as he attacked with a renewed fire.

I looked up at his voice, seeing him swerve this way and that to avoid getting hit; nii-san, I thought in awe, looking down at the katana lying on the ground next to me.

I thought of Hajime, remembering how he'd saved me on at least two or so occasions; I grabbed the handle of the sword, getting to my feet before I rushed into the fray.

"Get away from him!"

I crashed into the giant's side, momentarily catching him off guard and knocking him off balance; he teetered before he straightened as I reared back to glower up at him, my teeth clenched as my hands gripped the katana tightly.

"Foolish woman. If you force my hand, I will kill you." Amagiri warned in his lamenting tone.

>"Kawa," I heard my brother declare in quiet surprise behind him.<p>

I huffed and moved my right foot back, lightly lifting the katana. "Tell that line to someone who's a coward." I spat, flying at him.

He made to grab my ribs in one hand; I managed to dodge it, swinging my blade at his side and managing to graze him before I landed on the ground a little clumsily.

A large hand slapped the side of my head; I grunted slightly as I went flying.

"**NO**!" Toshi shouted as I heard someone catch me, a curse escaping from between their teeth.

>I looked up blearily to meet the cool blue eyes of Nagakura Shinpachi. "Shinpachi," I said quietly.<p>

He smirked gently at me, helping me stand. "Are you alright, Kawa-chan?" He asked, seeming to keep his eyes on the red mark on my cheek.

I nodded slightly, perking up to see my brother lashing out at the giant with a renewed anger, his blade catching glimpses of moonlight that bounced off the sharp weapon.

A soft smirk made my lip twitch as I watched him. _Typical Toshi_, I thought.

"Chizuru!" Sano exclaimed, perking my ears; I looked to see Kazama carrying the unconscious girl over his shoulder.

>"Let Chizuru go!" Shinpachi snarled as he drew his katana again.

He stopped and put her down to face my brother. "Care to take her back, then?" He wondered of him.

He really seemed pissed now. "Interesting; intruding on the Shinsengumi's grounds, I won't tolerate your incursions anymore!" He exclaimed as he charged, swinging his blade down on Kazama's who blocked his lunge.

Battle seemed to consume the courtyard; Shinpachi took on Amagiri as Sano continued to fight the third oni, the loud 'klang' of blades clashing ringing loudly in the night air as Toshi struck out at Kazama.

The girl seemed to stir, looking up alertly. "Hijikata-san!" She exclaimed.

Their blades disengaged again; Kazama paused and looked at the chipped blade of his _katana_ before he lunged at my brother, managing to punt his _katana_ out of his grip and send it flying into the air.

He fell back, preparing to draw his _wakizashi_.

"Toshi!" I shouted as I sprinted forward to protect him; if Kazama made him bleedâ€¦ I didn't want to think about it!

>Chizuru beat me to the punch, wakizashi drawn and bared defensively as she shielded my brother.

I skidded to a halt as my brother held her protectively to his chest, keeping the blade raised as he glowered at Kazama. "Nii-san," I began softly.

"Why do you choose to side with mere humans? You'll be betrayed in the end: you've seen with your own eyes these imitation demons that they've made. What meaning is there in staying with the fools who created them?" Kazama demanded, the _katana_ in his hand raised overhead as he was stopped in delivering a death blow.

"Even so, I believe in them!" Chizuru declared.

I widened my eyes slightly. "Chizuru," I said in surprise.

>
So that's why you've stuck with us this long_, I thought, lowering my _katana_. _Even if you have oni blood in your veins and you have friends who're like you that only wanted to protect you from humans, you still believe in us, in humansâ€| I never thought I'd meet a real oni that was kind and humble like you, Chizu-chan_. I smiled a little as I sheathed my blade.

The three _oni_ dispersed again, disappearing into the night.

She sank to her knees; I trodded over to her side, kneeling next to her. "Chizuru," I said quietly, perking her ears.

Her brown eyes met my gray and she looked like she was on the verge of tears. "K-Kawa," she said in what sounded like relief.

I smiled softly at her and pulled her into a light hug. "You've got guts, Chizu-chan. And I'm glad, that you're my friend." I said quietly.

She seemed to dig her fingers into my shoulders and sniff. I smiled gently, ruffling her hair. "Thank you, K-Kawa-chan," she croaked.

>I nodded, letting her pull away to rub her nose gingerly.<p>

"You did well." Sano said behind me, perking my ears; I looked up at him as he kneeled next to me and ruffled her hair gently.

"But because of me, everyoneâ€|" She began.

"It's a man's job to protect a woman, Chizuru; we were able to fight with more strength than usual because of you." Sano interjected. "Shinpachi-san and Hijikata-san, too," he added, looking over at the two aforementioned men.

"Harada-san, everyone, thank you." She said weakly.

I ruffled her hair gently, straightening to my feet and helping her up. "Toshi-nii fought well, too. Moreso for you than me." I said lightly.

>She nodded. "Hai," she smiled faintly. <p>

* * *

><p>AN: _i kinda made Kawa to look rather useless in this chapter.. i apologize for that! /bows_

anyway, you lot know the drill. review please; thanks~

9. Hurricane of Blood

A/N: _Kawa's worried over Souji's condition as the plot thickens with the Itou and Kondou faction. but there's a light at the end of the tunnel... enjoy!_

disclaimer: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 09: Hurricane of Blood**

He sounded like he was coughing again.

I frowned, putting his tray down on the floor and knocking. "You alright in there?" I wondered.

>"Y-yeah," he said around another cough.<p>

I exhaled and slid his door open, picking up his tray and carrying both his tray and my own inside his room before I closed the door.

>His green eyes met my gray as he lifted his head from the handkerchief he had in hand. "What's this for?" He wondered, indicating the tray of food I gave him.<p>

I bowed my head slightly in thanks for the food before sipping my soup. "Nii-san asked that I come check on you, so I figured I'd eat with you." I shrugged.

Souji looked down at the food on his tray and his gaze softened; he nodded, huffing slightly and closing his eyes nonchalantly. "That sounds a lot like Hijikata-san; why he sent you is a mystery, though." He mused, eating some of the rice from his bowl.

I rolled my eyes. "Idiot, just eat your food before it gets cold. I don't wanna have to tell Inoue-san that you refused to eat what he and Chizuru prepared," I scolded.

He looked at me with one open green eye and smirked, lifting the bowl of soup to his lips. "Now you really sound like him, Kawa-chan," he mused before sipping his soup.

I blushed slightly and smiled a little, eating at my rice. "The soup should help your coughing; Chizu-chan just made it." I noted, mirroring him and sipping soup from my own bowl.

Souji nodded and we ate in companionable silence.

>I stifled a yawn after we finished eating, stretching my arms to the ceiling.<p>

He smirked over at me. "Ya look like a happy cat," he mused lightly.

>I blinked and then blushed, huffing. "Shut up, don't tempt me to make you bedridden for the rest of your life," I warned.<p>

Souji chuckled, the smirk forming into a cat-like smile. "I wouldn't mind that kinda sentence," he said thoughtfully, a sly look crossing his face.

I rolled my eyes. "Pervert." I scolded, crossing my arms in the sleeves of my uniform haori.

He blinked as he seemed to notice my robe; a soft smile formed on his lips. "Yer wearing the haori I gave you, again." He mused.

I nodded and smiled a little. "I was cold, and I didn't find my red one, so I used this one." I shrugged.

>Souji nodded slightly, looking away as he coughed.<p>

I frowned slightly, moving closer to him to rub his back soothingly

as the cough progressed into a small fit.

>The tinge of blood on his handkerchief made a tic in my cheek twitch; I lowered my gaze.<p>

"I'm okay," he assured me, trying to sound strong.

I huffed. "Don't give me that excuse," I scolded, continuing to rub his back.

Souji glanced at me, putting the bloodied handkerchief to the side.

"Kawa," he began.

>I shook my head, resting my cheek on the back of his shoulderblade.

"I know you're not okay. I know you, Souji." I reminded quietly.<p>

He lowered his gaze and let his green eyes drop down. "Sometimes I hate it when you're able to see right through me," he muttered.

I smiled softly and buried my cheek into his back. "It's the only way I can ever see right through that front of yours," I remarked softly.

He huffed. "Idiot," he mumbled in defeat.

>I laughed quietly, rubbing his arm. "Souji," I said.<p>

"Hm?" He wondered.

I looked down at the empty bowl where his soup used to be. "Are you still mad about what I said about Itou-san?" I wondered.

He quieted and I felt his shoulders stiffen; his voice sounded bitter. "Still think I shoulda killed that bastard when I had the chance." He grumbled.

I looked at him. "Souji," I said quietly.

>He reached with his right hand to grasp my left hand, his fingers squeezing mine.<p>

"I knew he was gonna try something; I saw the way he looked at you." He said the last bit in a soft growl, making me shiver.

>His grip tightened. "Remind me to owe Hajime-kun whenever he comes back," he mused.<p>

I blushed slightly and smiled, nodding. "I'm sorry you had to hear that." I apologized.

Souji sighed. "It's okay. It just gives me more reason to cut that jackass's head off for trying to hurt you." He said grimly.

>I quieted and pressed my cheek to his shoulder. "Easy," I warned.<p>

He laughed a little. "Yer not fair, actin' like Hijikata-san," he pouted.

I smiled and squeezed his hand slightly. "Quit whining so much," I scolded.

Souji chuckled.

>I smiled again and closed my eyes.<p>

I loved Souji as my best friend. But did he love me more than that?

* * *

><p>Someone knocked on the door of my room.
"Can't you see I'm busy?" I barked, scrubbing annoyedly at a smudge on the sharp end of my _katana_.

The door slid open. "Is **that** any way to greet someone you basically pounced on a few months back?" A familiar voice wondered calmly; my eyes widened in surprise.

I looked up to meet the familiar cool blue stare of Saitou Hajime.

>"Hajime," I said as I felt a grin split across my face.<p>

He smiled back, entering the room. "What's with that face? You looked really concentrated for a moment, back there," he mused.

I dropped my _katana_ and straightened to throw myself into his arms; he seemed to fumble when I embraced him before a muffled yelp sounded from me as we fell over onto the floor.

"Owâ€|" He grimaced at the impact the floor had on his back.

I blushed heavily when I saw that I'd landed with my face in his chest, scrambling back to sit on my knees. "Sorry! Are you okay?" I asked worriedly, looking down at him.

Hajime rubbed his head gingerly, nodding. "It's alright. And yes, I'm okay. Except for the bump on my head." He muttered the last bit, looking at me with one open blue eye.

I blushed again and shrugged sheepishly. "Sorry," I replied.

He smiled slightly for me, sitting up a little to lift a hand to run it through my hair. "I've hardly ever seen you with your hair down; you look really beautiful." He commented quietly.

My cheeks burned shyly and I lowered my gaze. "Honestly, you've only been back for a few minutes and already yer charming me." I grumbled.

He chuckled softly, a smirk making his lips twitch. "Is it working?" He wondered.

I blushed again and met his blue eyes before I leaned forward to kiss him slowly.

>Hajime groaned aloud at the kiss, curling his fingers in my hair and kissing back.<p>

I gently pushed on his chest, forcing him away; I smirked gently. "You tell me." I replied in a sultry tone.

He made a face at my interruption of the kiss, his hand in my hair inclining my head towards his as his lips captured mine in a passionate kiss.

>I moaned softly, leaning onto his chest and knotting my fingers in his raven-black hair.<p>

I couldn't love Souji like I loved Hajime. Souji was my best friend, and Hajime was the man I loved.

It was as simple as that.

His blue eyes were gentle when we pulled apart, a slight flush staining his pale face as his gaze burned past the locks of raven-black hair that got in his way.
>I shivered, smiling happily despite feeling like I should've been blushing furiously at still sitting in his lap.<p>

Hajime's fingers traced the bandage on my left cheek gingerly, stirring me from my thoughts; I met his blue eyes to see they looked like they wanted to scold me.

I lowered my gaze humbly, hearing him sigh quietly. "You're just about the most reckless, beautiful woman I've ever met," he mused, perking my ears.

Blush warmed my cheeks at his words; I smiled shyly and shrugged. "If it lightens things, I missed you." I said lightly.

He rolled his eyes and smiled knowingly, pushing hair out of my face. "I missed you too." He replied.

I smiled again and blushed slightly when he tipped my chin upward and kissed me in that same loving manner he'd first kissed me with, his hands encircling my waist and squeezing.

A soft groan escaped him. "It's been a long time," he murmured, kissing me harder, his arms folding on my hips in a protective way, as if he never wanted me to leave him.

As if he wanted me to be in his arms forever.
>That was something I didn't mind in the slightest.<p>

* * *

><p>"Saitouâ€¦!" Sano exclaimed in surprise at seeing him sitting next to Toshi.<p>

"What's he doin' here?" Shinpachi demanded.

"From today onward, Saitou is once again with the Shinsengumi." Kondou-san explained.

Hajime glanced at me and a small grin flashed on his face; I blushed slightly and covered my mouth to hide a giggle.

Earlier wasâ€¦| _Wow_. I'd never been with a man, not even when I was younger. So being with Hajime wasâ€¦| _wonderful_.
>The blush returned to my cheeks as I thought about it.<p>

Were we really lovers, now?

"â€¦|Saitou-kun, acting under Toshi's orders, was trying to infiltrate the Itou faction." Kondou-san's voice stirred me from my lewd thoughts; I shook my head, running a hand through my hair.

"That's not fair, Hajime-kun; you actually had so much fun behind my back." Souji commented next to me.

We both seemed to blush at that; he coughed and cut his gaze to the side for a moment as I lifted a hand to scritch the back of my head before slipping both arms into the sleeves of my gray _haori_.

"Kondou-san, yer pretty mean, tooâ€|" Shinpachi griped as he rubbed his neck.

"Well, it was top secret after allâ€| I apologize for keeping everyone in the dark!" Kondou-san laughed sheepishly.

I looked over at Hajime and smiled softly.
>He was back, and I was happy for it. Not only because I loved him, but because we were friends and he was important to the Shinsengumi.<p>

* * *

><p>I trotted forward to come to his side, seeing Chizuru speaking with Heisuke.<p>

He looked at me. "How did it go?" He asked quietly.
>I nodded. "Mission accomplished." I replied.<p>

His stoic facade melted and he smiled softly at me. "Did you run all the way here?" He wondered.

I huffed and crossed my arms at my chest. "Not really, I just made sure I wasn't seen." I sniffed.

Hajime smiled knowingly and shook his head. "If you didn't act like your brother, you'd probably make a good ninja." He mused.

I blushed and cuffed him gently, pouting. "Shut up; don't be jealous because I'm pretty." I huffed.

He rubbed his head gingerly and made a face before his eyes softened. "On the contrary, the moonlight makes you look twice as beautiful as you did that night." He replied, his eyes wistful.

My cheeks burned again and I spluttered a huff, looking away.
>"Now now, don't be so lewd. Yer starting to act like Souji." I scolded.
He smirked. "I'd think a hundred things have to go wrong before that ever happens." He mused.

I couldn't help but giggle.

"Hajime-kun, what's going on here?" Heisuke asked, interrupting our conversation, as he looked at him confusedly.
>I looked at him and lowered my gaze, rubbing my arm gingerly.<p>

"Itou-san had planned to assassinate Commander Kondou. I've already informed the Shinsengumi." Hajime explained quietly.

"T-this can'tâ€| you're lying! Why would Itou-san wanna kill Kondou-san!?" He exclaimed.

"Heisuke, he's telling the truth. We all know it. Please, don't fight the truth. Everyone in the Shinsengumi, we all miss you! Sano and Shinpachi mostâ€¦" I pleaded.

"Itou-san is in league with the Satsuma Clan, now." Hajime stated darkly.

"Heisuke-kun, pleaseâ€¦ there's still time!" Chizuru pleaded.

The sound of rushing footsteps perked my ears; we looked up to see two ronin looking at Heisuke. "Todou, come quickly!" One of the men barked.

"Did something happen?" He asked alertly.

>"Itou-sensei has been assassinated by the Shinsengumi in the Abura alley!" The second man declared gravely.<p>

His teal-colored eyes widened; he looked at Chizuru before he clenched his teeth and sprinted for the bridge, leaping over the railing and hurrying into the dark.

>"Heisuke-kun; don't go!" Chizuru exclaimed.<p>

"Idiot!" I barked.

"Oi, you." One of the men declared, perking my ears; the men rounded on her, the first one drawing his katana and pointing the blade at her face. "I've seen you before. You're with the Shinsengumi, aren't you?" He demanded.

"What?" The second man balked as two more men circled Chizuru and myself.

I drew my katana and glowered from one man to the other. "It only makes sense that a Choshuu ****dog**** like you would be afraid of a ****wolf**** of Mibu." I spat coldly, baring my katana defensively.

One of the other men huffed. "What was that, ****bitch****?" He snapped, aiming the point of his katana at my face.

I clenched my teeth and glared coldly from one man to the other, feeling the girl come near my back. "Chizuru, when I give the signal, run." I whispered softly.

"B-but," she began worriedly.

"Do as I say." I ordered in a hiss.

She quieted and nodded. "Hai," she replied.

Someone stepped forward at my right, surprising me. I glanced to meet the familiar blue eyes of Hajime; a grin threatened to take over my lips.

Now things were really going to get interesting.

"Saitou..?!" One of the men balked as he came to stand in front of the girl.

"Yukimura, go." He ordered.

"H-hai!" She started to sprint away to the bridge.

"Wait!" One of the ronin rushed at her from behind, katana in hand.

>My wakizashi stabbed into his head from behind; he spluttered and fell forward as I kicked his back from behind.

"Kawaâ€|" She began.

"**_Run_**_!_" I barked.

She turned away to sprint into the darkness.

"**Slut**!" One of the other men snarled as he lunged at me; I whirled around, katana stabbing into his chest.
>A look of shock crossed his face; I twisted the blade through his back, yanking it out and shoving his body backward as blood spurted out from the wound.<p>

I flicked my wrist, blood flying from the blade; I glowered at the remaining men. "By the way, I am the She-Wolf of Mibu, **Hijikata Yasakawa**." I spat coldly.

Two men clenched the hilts of their blades before rushing me.

A flash of moonlight out of the corner of my eye appeared before one of the men was cut down, blood flying from the wound to his neck.

>Hajime nodded to me; I smiled, perking up as the second man lunged at me when he thought I wasn't looking.<p>

I brought my katana up to block him, grunting and shoving his weight off; blood flew in the air when my blade sliced his throat open, before the man fell.

We looked about to see that we'd cut down all of the men; I huffed and wiped a smudge of blood from my cheek, sheathing my katana.

"'She-wolf of Mibu', huh?" Hajime wondered near me, perking my ears.

>I blushed slightly and smiled at him. "Yeah, I guess I got in over my headâ€|" I laughed weakly.<p>

He handed me a handkerchief, a smirk on his face. "I like it." He replied as he sheathed his katana.
>I felt my cheeks warm up; I used his handkerchief to wipe the blood off my face, lowering my gaze humbly.
"You alright?" I wondered, looking at him as I handed him the handkerchief back.

He nodded, lifting a hand to cup my cheek, making the blush on my cheeks redden a little; he smiled thoughtfully. "Never better." He kissed me lightly, his blue eyes gentle.

I blushed again and kissed back, letting him pull away reluctantly.

"Come on, she-wolf, the others are most likely in over their heads again." Hajime declared quietly, taking my hand in his and turning to lead the way over the bridge at a sprint.

I smiled and ran at his heels, feeling his fingers squeeze mine in their grip.

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Blood flew in the air.

"Saitou..!" Sano declared in relief as he walked forward to stand with them.

"Sorry for being late." He replied, lifting his _katana_. "Leave this to me." He requested stiffly.

A flash of silver appeared before another of the men fell; I flicked my wrist, blood flying off the blade of my _katana_.
>"Kawa-chan!" Shinpachi beamed.<p>

I walked forward to stand next to Sano, huffing. "Leave it to you two to get yourselves in over your heads. Especially with these Satcho shitheads." I mused with a smirk, my fingers gripping the _katana_ tightly.

Sano huffed. "I see you're back to normal." He mused lightly; I laughed softly.

"Kawa, stay at my back." Hajime ordered, perking my ears.

I nodded. "You got it." I smirked at him.

* * *

><p>AN:** YES, KAWA AND HAJIME DID IT.**_ just wanted to get that out in the open~. :'D_
>also, the drama heats up so stay tuned for the next chapter!

you lot know the drill, yeah? review please; thanks~

10. Fading, Bleeding Sakura

A/N: _mostly Souji in this chapter, folks. just to let you know. other than that, enjoy!_

disclaimer: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 10: Fading, Bleeding Sakura**

He made a face.

>I exhaled patiently and placed the cup of soup next to him. "You're gonna have to eat it sometime." I declared, crossing my arms at my chest.<p>

He lowered his gaze before looking up at me. "You look really

beautiful in that _haori_." He mused, indicating my uniform _haori_.

I blushed slightly and huffed, smiling gently. "Shut up and eat your soup." I scolded, knowing he was only paying compliments because he was trying to worm his way out of eating the soup.

Souji smiled softly at me, lifting a hand to rub the back of his neck. "Geez, every time I look at ya, ya act more like Hijikata-san." He griped.

I blinked before lifting a hand to scratch the back of my head. "_Bakkero_", don't lump me together with him." I grumbled.
>He laughed lightly, perking my ears; my eyes softened.<p>

It'd been a while since I'd heard him laugh.

He started coughing again, putting his handkerchief to his cover his mouth; I moved forward to rub his back soothingly, feeling his shoulders shake slightly.

"I-I'm alright, Kawa-chan," he managed, pulling the handkerchief away from his mouth to look down at the small wad of blood that stained the white cloth.

I winced slightly and shook my head, resting my cheek on his shoulder. "Don't lie to me like that," I scolded.
>Souji glanced up at me and quieted, lifting his hand to run his fingers through my hair. "It's a wonder yer not a better nurse," he muttered.<p>

I smirked slightly and pressed my cheek to his shoulder. "Because nurses don't brain their patients for not listenin'." I quipped.

>He chuckled. "That a threat?" He wondered.<p>

I smiled and shook my head. "Not today." I replied.
>He sighed. "Yer no fun." He seemed to pout.<p>

I rolled my eyes and poked his cheek, lifting the cup of soup. "It's not gonna kill you." I mused.

Souji eyed the soup before he sighed in defeat. "If ya weren't so damn beautiful, I'd say no." He grumbled, taking the cup from my hands and sipping some of the warm liquid.

I smiled gently at him. "Of course you would." I mused, leaning forward to kiss his cheek lightly before I pulled away to get to my feet.

He looked up at me before taking another sip. "Where're you off to?" He wondered as I fixed the _haori_ and pulled it onto my shoulders.

>I looked at him and smiled lightly. "Nii-san asked me to patrol with Hajime." I shrugged.<p>

Souji huffed quietly to himself and sipped the soup. "Ya've been spending a lot of time with him; he's not treating you bad is he? I'd have to kill him if he is." He wondered.

I nodded and pursed my lips. "He's treating me fine, Souji. Don't worry; I can look out for myself." I assured him.

He looked up at me with one green eye and seemed unamused. "Yeah, I've heard that one before. Need I remind you of the Masuya raid?" He pointed out.

My cheeks burned slightly and I huffed. "Shut up, that was a fluke." I grumbled.

>He looked at me and his eyes softened. "Ya look really beautiful when you blush." He mused.<p>

I scratched the back of my head in frustration. "Shut up," I scolded.

Souji laughed quietly. "Get moving then, she-wolf." He teased, perking my ears.

>I looked at him, feeling my cheeks warm up. "Damn that Hajime," I grumbled, looking away shyly.<p>

"It really suits you, actually. It beats 'warrior princess'; ta be honest, you do resemble a wolf, sometimes." He noted calmly, sipping the soup.

I looked at him again. "Y'really think so?" I wondered quietly.

>"Mm-hm. Keep decking guys with that sucker punch of yours and that name will stick." He mused lightly.<p>

I smiled softly, kneeling next to him to hug his neck; he put the cup down and held onto me, hugging my waist.

"What's that for?" He wondered in my shoulder.

>I pulled away to ruffle his hair. "Because that was the nicest compliment you've ever told me." I said with a shrug.<p>

Souji's cheeks warmed slightly and he huffed, smirking at me. "Keep hugging me and I'll make you stay here in bed with me for the rest of the day," he warned teasingly.

I rolled my eyes and pulled out of his arms. "Letch." I chided.

He chuckled, smiling at me. "Don't get in over your head out there. Otherwise I really will hafta kill Hajime-kun for letting it happen." He advised.

I nodded and straightened to my feet, smiling at him again before heading to the door. "Stop worryin' and finish your soup. I really will hafta brain ya if you don't finish it." I warned nonchalantly over my shoulder, sliding the door open.

Souji chuckled softly. "I will, She-wolf of Mibu." He teased gently.

I glanced back at him and winked before stepping out into the cold December afternoon and closing the door behind my leave, walking down the pathway.

* * *

><p>Something bad was going to go down.
I could feel it in my bones and it made me shiver.

I stepped out of the meeting room, being met with the chilly nighttime air; I shivered again and pulled my _haori_ closer, trotting down the pathway.

Souji.

My feet picked up the pace as I sprinted to his room.
>I don't know why I felt like I had to see him, this late at night; but something was wrong this time.<p>

If anything happened to himâ€| A pair of red sneering eyes flashed in my mind.

My teeth clenched together.

Damn that Kazama. Damn him back to hell!

I skidded to a halt short of rounding the corner near his room, hearing him throw the door open as he sounded like he stumbled inside.

Souji.

I looked down at my hands to see they were shaking; they balled into fists, my knuckles turning white from the tightness.

"Iâ€| can still fight!" His muffled voice sounded, perking my ears.

I clucked my tongue and rushed forward.
>"Souji!" I declared alertly as I stopped short of his doorway; my eyes widened as he was drinking something from inside a small vial.<p>

Those red eyesâ€|

"Souji, **NO**!" I exclaimed, watching the vial drop to the floor.

>He cried out in pain, doubling over and holding onto his neck.<p>

"Souji," I rushed to his side, holding onto his back. "Souji, are you alright?" I asked worriedly, looking down at him and hating that Kazama bastard with each second.

His eyes seemed to widen as I gasped slightly; his hair color shifted to the color of snow, and I saw that his canines sharpened.

>"Souji," I said softly, pulling away as he sat straight.<p>

He looked at me with red eyes; I widened my eyes slightly.
>The image of that first Fury I'd seen three years ago flashed in my mind when I looked into his red eyes that replaced his beautiful green eyes.<p>

My hand shook as I reached for the hilt of my _katana_ at my hip.

>He grabbed my hand, surprising me; I met his red eyes again.<p>

He shoved me away so I crashed into the wall; I grimaced and sank against it, my head spinning as I heard the rustling of clothes before his footsteps left the room.

His teasing smiles appeared in my mind.

>That day after the Ikedaya incident flashed by.<p>

"I swear that I'll protect you, Kawa." His voice sounded like a growl.

I shook out of it, looking around the room to see he was gone.

>"Souji," I looked down at my katana and closed my eyes tightly.

I sprinted out of the room after his leave, vainly praying that I could find him before he did something stupid.

>"Kawa-chan!" I skidded to a halt at seeing I was passing by the well, meeting the brown eyes of Chizuru.<p>

"Chizuru," I began, seeing her eyes look down at my _katana_ I held in hand; they lifted up to meet my gaze.

"What's wrong?" She asked.

>I shook my head. "It's Souji." I replied.<p>

Her eyes widened before she nodded; she dropped the bucket and trotted to my side as I kept running.

>"Is he alright?" She wondered.<p>

I lowered my gaze, my hand gripping the _katana_. "No, I think he's in trouble. Come on." I said, perking up as we almost ran into Sannan-san and Heisuke.

"Heisuke, Sannan-san, what the hell's going on?" I asked, looking to the both of them for an answer.

"They're just trying to challenge us." Heisuke answered, indicating the gunshots I'd vaguely listened to in the distance.

>"Just now Okita-san ran out by himself!" Chizuru informed them, surprising both Fury.<p>

"Let's go," I declared, taking off at a sprint into the darkness.

>Chizuru ran to fall back at my side as Heisuke joined us.<p>

Souji, please don't do anything stupid!

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"Souji!"

"Okita-san!"

I could blearily see his silhouette in the mist; I gritted my teeth and willed my feet to go faster, feeling relieved that he wasn't hurt.

"Kawa, stay away!" He shouted at me, perking my ears.
>He ran forward.<p>

"Souji!" I declared.
>Two gunshots went off into the night air.<p>

"_**NO**__!" I screamed.

He stood tall in front of one of the alleyways for a long agonizing moment before sinking to his knees.

"Souji!"

"Okita-san!"

I dove forward, catching him in my arms as he fell backward, feeling hot tears threaten to fall down my cheeks as I gathered him to my chest.
>"Souji, please," I cried, looking down at him.<p>

He cracked open an eye, a smirk making his lips twitch. "I said I'd protect you," he reminded weakly.

The tears fell down my cheeks; I clenched my teeth and heard a strangled whimper in the back of my throat. "You're such an idiot." I croaked.
>He limply raised a hand to my cheek. "Don't cry, okay? Not for me!" He pleaded before his eyes closed and he fell unconscious.<p>

I closed my eyes tightly and buried my face into his hair, holding him to my chest as I heard Chizuru and Heisuke come forward.

* * *

><p>"Osaka?" I looked up at my brother.<p>

He met my gaze and nodded. "Otherwise, he won't heal from those silver bullets." He replied.

I looked down at Souji and nodded slightly, lowering a hand to stroke his brown hair. "You'd better come back from this, or I'll never forgive you for it." I whispered quietly.

"Kawa-chan, maybe you should rest," Chizuru began quietly.

I looked up at her and nodded slightly again. "Yeah," I replied, smiling weakly before I straightened to my feet and opened the door.

>My eyes flew down to Souji's sleeping form before I exited and slammed the door behind me, walking away to go to my own room.<p>

Once I got to my room, I all but screamed my head off.
>My fists slammed into the pillow as I let the angered tears fall, damning those ronin, damning Kazama, damning the Satcho bastards that started this whole mess.<p>

I buried my face into the futon, closing my eyes tightly. "Why did

you protect me, Souji?" I demanded into the mattress, sniffing and holding the pillow to my chest.

Someone knocked on my door outside. "Kawa?" I heard his familiar voice ask quietly.

I lifted my head and rubbed my nose gingerly. "It's open," I replied, my voice sounding hoarse to my own ears.

Hajime slid the door open, closing it behind his entrance.
>I sat up and wiped the tears from my cheeks, sniffing. "Hajime," I said in slight surprise, wondering why he of all people had come to see me.<p>

He lowered his gaze slightly, looking at the pillow. "I just came to see if you were alright," he said quietly.
>I lowered my gaze as well and shrugged. "I've had better." I replied.<p>

He quieted and reached for my hand; I looked down at his hand and squeezed it in mine, looking up at him before I leaned forward to hug him.

Hajime held me, letting me cry into his shoulder.

I sniffed and pulled away a little in his arms to meet his blue eyes. "Hajime," I began softly.
>He brushed the tears away, looking at me curiously. "What is it?" He asked.<p>

I blushed slightly and smiled at him. "I love you." I said quietly, catching him off guard.

His blue eyes widened slightly before they softened a moment later; he gently pulled me into another hug, holding me close to his chest.

>I felt the blush warm my cheeks again and smiled, resting my cheek on his shoulder.<p>

"I love you, too." He replied, perking my ears.

I nodded a little, closing my eyes contently.

I love you, Saitou Hajime. Don't ever leave me.

* * *

><p>AN: _just an FYI, this is before the final battle at Toba-Fushimi in _Shinsengumi Kitan_. yay, last episode of the first season! lol yeah that kinda sounds retarded.. anyway~ the Kawa/Hajime ship is still set sail! just a reminder._

you guys know the drill, yeah? review please; thanks~

11. Just Another War

A/N: _the final episode! the battle of Toba-Fushimi: will it be a turning point or will it go up in flames? enjoy the chap._

"Shinpatsu!" I beamed in relief, my shoulders slumping.

>"Nagakura-san, Shimada-san!" Chizuru declared lightly.<p>

"Shinpachi!" Sano grinned.

"What's this? I'm not a ghost, yet. I've got legs," Shinpachi laughed as the two of them came in and sat down with us.

>"Thank goodness," the girl said in relief.<p>

"Idiot, yer lucky I haven't brained you for scarin' Sano and Chizu-chan!" I barked.

Hajime sighed patiently at my side and took my hand, keeping me down.

"Calm yourself, She-wolf," he scolded.

>I felt my cheeks warm and I huffed, looking away. "Shut up," I grumbled in defeat.<p>

"Damn, the enemy's guns and cannons were goin' off all around us. It's impossible to breach their perimeter. And," Shinpachi said in lament; his fists tightened at his sides, "I lost almost all my men in the fight." He growled the last bit.

Another explosion went off, making the ground shake a little; my fingers tightened their grip on his hand reflexively.

>"The battle's getting closer," Shinpachi grumbled.<p>

"Toshi-san," Inoue-san looked at my brother.

He lifted his katana up, gripping it in his right hand. "Has the age of fighting with swords and spears come to an end?" He wondered.

Nii-san, I thought; my hands balled into fists at my sides. "It may be ending, but that doesn't mean we're gonna take it lying down. So long as I can stand, I'll fight for us, our family." I declared sternly, slightly surprising everyone.

Toshi seemed to snap out of it first, his violet eyes softening.

"You've finally grown up," he mused quietly, perking my ears.

I met his violet eyes and smiled, nodding. "Guess I have." I shrugged.

Sano threw his arm around my shoulders. "Now there's our fearless princess," he chuckled, ruffling my hair.

I blushed slightly before laughing quietly. "How many times have I told ya that I'm not a princess?" I griped playfully.

"You're not a princess," Hajime said next to me; I looked at him.

His blue eyes looked soft and determined at the same time, making me shiver slightly. "You're a warrior, like the rest of us." He mused.

>I felt my cheeks burn as I lifted a hand to scritch the back of my head. "Geez, Haji-kun," I grumbled.<p>

Shinpachi, Sano and Inoue-san laughed lightly.

I smiled at them, looking to my brother again to see he looked like he was proud of what I said; I smiled again.

>Nii-san, don't you dare let go of that sword, I thought.

His violet eyes turned hard again. "We're retreating, but we've not been defeated. This debt ****will**** be repaid." He stated, perking my ears.

>"Nii-san," I began quietly before smiling slightly and nodding.

"Right." I mused.<p>

"When night falls, send out the Fury to clear the path. And one of us will need to go seek reinforcements from Yodo Castle." He instructed.

"I'll go." Chizuru spoke up, perking our ears.

I looked at her alertly. "Chizu-chan," I began concernedly.

"You?" Toshi wondered.

"Everyone's worn out, so please rest well until nightfall. If it's messenger duty, I'll go." She explained, looking at him stubbornly.

"Please, please let me do whatever I can!" She added.

"I'll go as well," Inoue-san chimed.

We looked at him in surprise.

"Inoue-san," she said quietly; he smiled and nodded slightly.

>"I understand; I'm counting on you." Toshi declared, nodding his head.<p>

As soon as Inoue-san and Chizuru took off, I looked at my brother.

>Blood stained the strip of cloth wrapped around his hand; I exhaled patiently and pulled my handkerchief out, ripping another strip of cloth from it.<p>

He looked at me in curiosity before I moved forward to undress his wound, putting the dirty cloth to the side and tying the new cloth around his hand and wrist.

He sounded like he sighed. "You worry too much," he mused.

I scowled slightly and met his violet eyes. "I have to, with you acting like a hotshot. Just because you have the nickname 'Oni Vice-Commander' doesn't mean you have to rush into battle headfirst." I reminded.

Toshi rolled his eyes. "Maybe Souji was right; maybe you do act a lot like me." He said.

I blushed slightly before huffing, scowling at him. "Shut up." I grumbled, thinking about the girl again and looking up at him.

"Nii-san, why didn't you send me with her? I'm faster than Inoue-san, and if anything happened, I'd be able to protect Chizuru!" I

asked.

He looked at me with hard violet eyes. "If I sent the both of you out there, I might as well have slit my own stomach. Losing Chizuru is bad, but losing both her **and** youâ€|" He quieted and looked down at his bandaged hand.

I blushed slightly and clasped his hand in mine, lowering my gaze. "Toshi," I said softly.

"We're still blood, and I would rather die than let anything happen to you." He ignored the wince on my face. "I don't want to see you killed, especially at the hands of those Satsuma bastards. I'm sorry for bringing you into this war, and for what happened with Souji." He declared.

I closed my eyes and sighed before I cuffed his head.
>He grimaced, opening an eye at me. "What the hell was that forâ€|?" He demanded, rubbing his head gingerly.<p>

"Don't apologize now! I coulda said 'no' when you came to take me in and stayed at that temple. Toshi, it's because of you that I have friends, and family, people who love me just as much as I love them. And it's because of you that I'm able to wield a sword confidently. I swear that I'll rip apart any bastard that tries to kill you, nii-san. Please believe that." I stated.

Toshi quieted again and his eyes softened before he looked away, lifting his good hand to scritch the back of his head. "Good grief, you're the most stubborn woman I've ever met, Yasakawa." He groaned.

I laughed softly and smiled at him. "And don't you ever forget it." I amended.

* * *

><p>He looked at me in surprise. "Kawa," he began.<p>

I smiled lightly. "I'm gonna come back to you. I will." I pulled him forward to kiss him hard.
>Hajime kissed back just as hard, letting me pull away; his blue eyes resembled hard blue stones. "Don't get yourself killed out there." He declared.<p>

I nodded and looked in the direction my brother went, smiling up at him. "Right." I grunted and took off after his trail, vainly praying that I could reach him in time.

Nii-san, please don't do anythin' stupid! I mentally prayed, clenching my teeth.

The sound of blades clashing rang in the air as I sprinted through the wood.
>Damn it!

My hand flew to the hilt of my _katana_ as I saw my brother crouched to the ground, weaponless.

"It's over; at the end of the day, you guys are weak, and you can't

accomplish anything on your own. How can you guys protect anything? It's ridiculous!" A drawling voice declared, a voice I recognized belonged to Kazama.

I drew my _katana_ as I neared them.

"**GET AWAY FROM HIM**!" I crashed into the side of his assailant, knocking him away.

"Kawa-chan!" Chizuru exclaimed in surprise.

A gentle but rough hand grabbed my arm, yanking me away from his assailant. "Idiot! What in hell were you thinking, following me?" He demanded as I met his violet eyes.

I smirked gently up at him. "Blood is thicker than water; if you think I'm gonna let you die by his hand you're really an idiot, nii-san." I declared.
>Toshi's eyes widened slightly before he nodded, his eyes turning hard again.<p>

"Your meddling is starting to piss me off, woman." The sneering voice of Kazama Chikage growled behind me.

I turned to glare up at him, inwardly feeling surprise at seeing his hair pure white like snow and his eyes a raw gold, four horns protruding from his forehead.

So this is his true form, I thought; my hands gripped the handle of my _katana_. "Well good, I'm glad something has managed to cut through that shit-faced skin of yours." I snapped frostily.

Kazama aimed the point of his _katana_ at me. "Stay out of my way!" He lunged at me.

I prepared to attack when someone blocked him with a _wakizashi_, surprising me; my eyes caught the long black hair.
>"Toshi," I said softly.<p>

"Get away, Yasakawa. **Now**!" He growled, glancing back at me with one stern violet eye.

I quieted reluctantly and nodded, retreating to stand next to the girl.

He bared his blade defensively as Kazama made him fall back to grab his discarded _katana_, glaring at him.
>"Look at you; do you think you stand a chance?" He wondered snidely.<p>

I clenched my teeth and glowered at him, lifting my _katana_.
"Nii-san," I began.
>He reached inside his robes for something small; my eyes widened.<p>

"That'sâ€¦" Chizuru squeaked.

"_Ochimizu_; how much of a fool can you be?" Kazama wondered.

"'Fool'? So what if I am? We've always been a clan of fools, dreaming a foolish dream. We've come this far only because we've been obsessed with that dream. Right now, we're still on our way up the hill. We can't fall now; I won't be defeated in this place!" Toshi snarled, yanking the cork off with his teeth.

"Hijikata-san, don't!" Chizuru exclaimed.

"Even as a Fury, you'll just be a bare imitation. You can't match a real demon." Kazama sneered.

"Brother," I began, remembering Souji's pain, the blood he shed for usâ€¦ the blood he shed for me.
>He downed the "medicine".<p>

"_**NO**__!" I shouted, watching in horror as his hair turned pure white like snow. "Toshi!" I declared, moving forward to his side.

"Hijikata-san," the girl whimpered behind me as I lifted a hand to touch his shoulder.
>"Nii-san," I said softly.<p>

"I've had enough: whether it's the Choshuu traitors, or you pain-in-the-ass oniâ€¦ I'm an imitation, huh; so what if I am? Haven't we always been regarded as imitation warriors? But no matter what, as long as I have faith, I won't give up. Even if I'm nothing more than an imitation, what I believe in is real. If I defeat you as a Fury, then Iâ€¦ we'll win this, won't we?" He glowered at the oni before charging forward.

"_Toshi, __**don't**__!" I shouted, the wind picking up and making me fall back, lifting an arm to cover my eyes as the angered tears stung at my cheeks.
>Why did he have to become a Fury? I didn't want him to die! He was the only family I had; if he died, what hope would there be for the rest of the Shinsengumi? What hope would there be for me?<p>

They flew at each other for the final blow.

"**Hijikata-san**!" Chizuru cried.

"_**TOSHI**__!" I yelled, rushing forward to stop them, to defend my brother.

I'm sorry, Hajime: it looks like I won't make it backâ€¦

A large blur intervened before I could, forcing me to skid to a halt; I widened my eyes alertly.
>Amagiri stopped Kazama from striking as Yamazaki stopped my brother; blood stained his back.<p>

"Yamazaki," I began in surprise.

"What're you doing, Vice-Commander? You're the head, and we're the arms and legs, right? If we lose an arm or leg, we can replace itâ€¦ But if we were to lose our head, then it would be all over." Yamazaki asked before he fell unconscious.

"Yamazaki-san!" Chizuru rushed ahead of me to go to his

side.

"Toshi," I looked at my brother as his appearance returned to normal; I embraced him, slightly surprising him, burying my face into his back.

>The worry and relief seemed to wash over me like a giant wave, making my shoulders shake as I closed my eyes tight.<p>

"Kawa," someone pulled me away from him reluctantly; I opened my eyes to meet the worried and relieved blue stare of Hajime.

I smiled weakly for him, letting his arm hold my shoulders as I looked at my brother.

>His arm tightened on my shoulders reflexively.<p>

* * *

><p>I looked at the sun in the distance beyond the ocean waters.<p>

"You should get some rest. It's been a long day." He said, slightly surprising me; I looked to see he still stood at the railing, looking out into space.

I crossed my arms in my haori sleeves and walked forward to his side. "I can't sleep." I replied.

He glanced at me briefly before looking out at the ocean. "We're going to come back from this; don't worry." He reminded quietly.

>I nodded, releasing a quiet sigh; my right fist slugged his arm.<p>

"Ow, what was that for?" He demanded, scowling down at me and rubbing his arm gingerly.

I scowled up at him, planting my hand on my hip.

>"That's for acting like the idiot *oni* you are and taking the stupid Ochimizu." I explained patiently.

He quieted and looked away, looking out at the blue ocean. "Kawa," he began.

I hugged him, surprising him again; he quieted again and held onto me, squeezing my back.

>"I'm glad you're alive. Even though I still have half a right mind to kill you for behaving so recklessly," I declared, pressing my cheek into his chest.<p>

Toshi seemed to smile as he squeezed again. "I'm sorry that I scared you, like that." He apologized softly.

I pulled away a little to rub my nose gingerly, looking up at him.

"It's okay, Souji already beat you to the punch." I shrugged.

>He fought a wince at the reminder, exhaling. "Don't remind me." He grumbled.<p>

I smiled softly and slipped out of his arms, walking away to go back below deck. "Nii-san," I said, perking his ears.

>"What is it?" He wondered.<p>

I looked back at him and smiled again. "Next time you try something stupid like that, I ****will**** have to kill you." I pointed out.

Toshi's face softened and he smirked. "Get some sleep, she-wolf." He chided, waving me off.

I felt my cheeks warm and I huffed indignantly. "Shut up, _oni_." I quipped, storming away back below deck.

>If I didn't know better, I thought I'd heard him chuckle.<p>

* * *

><p>AN: _finally, the last episode of the first season. a new age of warfare has come: will the Shinsengumi go with the modern flow or will they fight it to the last man?_

_you lot know the drill, yeah? thanks~

>(**edit**:_i changed the chapter out. the last two paragraphs were all clumped together and it was annoying the hell outta me.. ^^; sorry! /bows_)

12. Prologue: Blooming Sun

A/N: _okay, so this is the start of Hekketsuroku, the second season. not much to put, so enjoy the chap._

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 12: Prologue: Blooming Sun_

Sheesh, this damn shirt was tight around my neck.

>I scowled at my reflection, sighing.<p>

Obeying my brother's orders, those of us who were going to take part in the war were required to wear Western clothing, so of course I was required as well.

I looked at my reflection again.

Shin-length black boots with silver buckles covered my feet, black breeches covered my legs; my _haori_, the one Souji had given me four years ago, was tied around my waist like a coat, the bright contrast of pale blue and white against black standing out; I kept my blue _obi_ sash tied above the _haori_, securing both _katana_ and _wakizashi_ at my right hip; a pale gray long-sleeve button-up blouse covered my torso, being shielded by a dark blue vest that buttoned up like the blouse.

I sighed again and lifted a hand to unbutton the first four buttons of the collar, giving my neck room to breathe as well as inadvertently flash some of my cleavage; I looked at my hair and lifted a strand of black to look at it.

Hajime had helped me cut it earlier, so it now was a sort of bob, my bangs remaining longer than the rest of the length of my hair.

If we were to go incognito as Western soldiers, I needed to cut my hair too.

He placed a hand on my shoulder, stirring me from my reverie; I looked up to meet his blue eyes.
>"Well?" I wondered, lifting a brow.<p>

His eyes softened and he smiled. "You look beautiful in blue." He mused; my cheeks warmed.
>I lifted a hand to scritch the back of my head, sighing. "Honestly," I muttered in embarrassment.<p>

"Kawa-chan, you look so different!" Heisuke barked, perking my ears.

>I looked over at him and smiled lightly. "Ya think so, huh?" I wondered.<p>

"Damn right, damn it Kawa, ya look so gorgeous!" Shinpachi crowed.

My cheeks warmed again and I laughed. "Shut up, at least I don't look like asparagus." I teased.

"Oh yeah?" He smirked playfully.
>I giggled.<p>

Hajime's arm folded around my shoulders. "Honestly, remind me to never let you go drinking with these three." He mused patiently.

I blushed before laughing softly, wrapping my arm around his waist. "If we do, you're getting the tab." I pointed out.
>He made a face at me; I laughed again.<p>

"Wah, Kawa-chan, you look so different!" The voice of Chizuru exclaimed from the doorway, perking my ears.

I met her brown eyes and smiled lightly, slipping free of Hajime's grip. "Yeah, so I've heard." I mused with a giggle.
>She smiled lightly at me, turning to see my brother and her eyes widened, a faint blush staining her cheeks.<p>

I followed her gaze and smiled warmly; like me, Toshi had also cut his hair, cropping it into a similar hairdo. It was kind of creepy that our new hairdos made us look like twins.

"_Damn_, Kawa, ya look _gorgeous_ in that!" Sano exclaimed, perking my ears.

I looked at his black-and-white attire and smiled, rolling my eyes. "Geez, what's up with you guys? Ya act like you've never seen Western clothing before," I griped.

"Not on the infamous She-Wolf of Mibu, though." Hajime mused, perking my ears.
>My cheeks burned again; I huffed, ribbing him. "Shut up, yer almost as bad as these three idiots." I scolded.<p>

He seemed pleased at ruffling my feathers, as he usually was whenever he did that to me in the past.

.....oOo.....

I scowled up at the dying sun.

"What's that face for?" A voice wondered near me, perking my ears.

>I looked to see him standing next to me; I shrugged, lifting a hand to rub my right arm gingerly. "It's nothing," I replied.<p>

He seemed to roll his eyes. "I know when you're lying," he pointed out knowingly.

My cheeks burned; I huffed, looking away. "Souji, I wonder if he's doing alright." I mused softly.

He quieted next to me. "You really care about him." He guessed.

I nodded. "He's my best friend; that night he turned into a Fury, Iâ€ he saved me, from getting shot at by a couple of ronin." His smiling face appeared in my mind; my hand shook a little. "The next time he comes around, I'm going to make sure he doesn't get hurt. I don't care who I fight, human or _oni_. If they hurt him again, I'll tear them apart." I vowed coldly, looking down at my side to see that I'd dropped my hand to grip the hilt of my _katana_.

Hajime quieted again and looked down at my hand on the hilt; he clasped his hand over mine, his fingers squeezing. "And if anything happens to you while you're protecting him, I'll have to kill him for it." He mused, perking my ears.

I looked at his blue eyes to see they were hard as stone; my cheeks warmed slightly and I lowered my gaze. "Hajime," I began.

He released my hand to tilt my chin up with his thumb and index finger, surprising me again; I stared up into his cool blue eyes, feeling a shiver roll down my spine at seeing a raw protectiveness and sternness brighten his gaze. "I don't want anything to happen to you. Losing you would be grounds enough for _seppuku_." He declared sternly.

I blushed again, shivering at the mere idea of his "honorable" suicide if I were to die in battle; I removed his hand from my chin to pull him into a kiss.

>Hajime pulled me to his chest protectively, kissing back.
I lifted a hand to curl in his raven-black bangs, holding his cheek.

He pulled away reluctantly to hold me, planting a soft kiss on my forehead before he sighed quietly.

* * *

><p>AN: _sorry if this chapter is short; i think this's the shortest chapter i've ever written. there wasn't much for me to put Kawa in.. ^^;_

>anyway, more is coming soon, so look forward to that.

you lot know the drill, yeah? thanks~

13. Blooming Sun pt2: Save Me (Just In Time)

A/N: _part two of chapter twelve. will Hijikata manage to get reinforcements from Edo? enjoy the chap._

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 13: Blooming Sun Part Two - Save Me (Just In Time)**

"Nii-san!" I declared.

He paused short of mounting his horse, looking at me; his violet eyes that were usually hard softened a little at seeing me standing before him. "What is it?" He asked, removing his foot from the stirrup to stand on the ground.

I lowered my gaze. "Please be careful, coming back." I requested, perking his ears.

His eyes seemed to soften again as he came forward to plant a hand on my head, surprising me.

>I looked up to meet his violet eyes.
"I will. I want you to do something for me, though," he requested.

I nodded. "What is it?" I asked.

He took on that stern gaze of his he was well known for. "Look after Chizuru. She's been sworn to protect Kondou-san, but seeing as you're faster and you'll be here, I want you to protect her. Don't let anything happen to her, or to yourself. If things turn for the worst, retreat with Saitou-san and the others. Am I understood?" He asked.

I smiled softly and nodded again. "Completely. I'll make sure she doesn't get hurt." I felt a smirk try to overtake my mouth. "Are you actually saying that you like her, nii-san?" I wondered quietly, perking his ears.

Toshi looked away with a huff, lifting a hand to scratch the back of his head, as I saw the hint of blush staining his cheeks.

>"Just shut up and do as I say," he growled.<p>

I laughed softly, grinning. "I just had to heckle you, you know that." I teased gently.

He poked my forehead with two fingers chidingly. "You're just as impossible as you were four years ago," he mused.

>I blushed slightly and huffed, looking away. "Get moving before that horse leaves you behind." I scolded.<p>

Toshi ran a hand through my short hair, smirking. "Take care of things, She-Wolf." He teased.

>I blinked and lowered my gaze humbly. "Damn it, Hajime," I cursed him.<p>

He sort of chuckled, pulling away to return to mount his horse.

"Don't get yourself in over your head, Kawa." He advised, urging the

horse to trot away into the forest.

>I waved after him, smiling softly. "I won't so long as you don't, nii-san." I mused.<p>

* * *

><p>Blood flew in the air.<p>

"Hajime!" I sliced through the throat of one of the Fury, falling back to his side.

>He lifted his katana as I flicked my wrist to the side, blood flying from the blade. "I thought Hijikata-san had requested you protect the girl," he mused.

I nodded. "He did, but I've been dying to cut a Fury since Toba-Fushimi." I replied, lunging at one that flew at me and stabbing his heart, yanking the blade out quickly as the body fell.

He seemed to groan. "Why doesn't that surprise me?" He wondered, slicing through another one, stabbing into the throat of a second one before both fell.

I kicked a Fury in the head, grunting and stabbing the heart before yanking my _katana_ free as it fell. "Because you know me," I said lightly.

He yanked on my _haori_, pulling me to his back as at least five more Fury circled us.

>"I'll be just fine here. I'll pave a path for you to get away from here; you know your brother will have your head if Kondou-san or Chizuru die when he entrusted you to stay with them." Hajime declared, perking my ears.<p>

I looked at him and nodded, pulling his chin down to crush my lips against his lovingly. "Don't die on me," I pleaded softly, smiling up at him.

He returned the smile and nodded, lunging at the two Fury that blocked any escape into the wood, slicing through them both. "Go, now!" He ordered.

I sprinted away, hearing him cut through more flesh and I willed my feet to go faster.

* * *

><p>AN: _sorry for the short chapters; there's a fight scene coming up so i've been treating this chap and the last chap as prologues._

>again, sorry! bows_

you lot know the drill, yeah? thanks~

14. Fight For Our Love, Loss

A/N: _the fight scene is here! lol hope you enjoy the chap. also there's some Kawa/Souji fluff in this. just an FYI. enjoy!_

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 14: Fight For Our Love, Loss_

The sun was starting to die down beneath the distant mountain range.

I panted slightly as I leaned against a tree.

Geez, where was that girl? At this rate, I might not reach her until nightfall.

>I looked down at the katana at my hip, seeing my brother's face and smiling a little.

A pair of gleaming red eyes flashed in my mind; I widened my eyes slightly.

'_I swear that I'll protect you, Kawa_, ' his familiar growl rang in my ears.

>"Souji," I gripped the hilt of my katana, lifting my gaze to scan the forest.

Nothing out there.

I peeled myself away from the tree to straighten and take off into the forest.

>I'm gonna protect you too, Souji. No matter what!<p>

Haggard coughing sounded nearby; I widened my eyes alertly as I recognized the coughing.

I knew that voice anywhere; I drew my _katana_ as I drew closer to the coughing noise.

>Hang on, Souji!

"â€|_Ochimizu_ can't heal your tuberculosis. Chizuru, take a good look: weaklings can only live to be killed." A boy's voice sneered.

"**Okita-san**!" Chizuru's voice screamed.

A loud metallic '_klang_' rang in the air.

:::::::::oOo:::::::::

The boy's eyes widened behind the _katana_ he'd drawn up to block my strike.

"Kawa-chan!" The girl declared in surprise behind me.

"Kawa," Souji breathed.

I stared down at the boy's big brown eyes; so this was the twin Souji mentioned, that one time.

>Our blades disengaged; I drew back to stand in front of Souji, extending my right arm to block him.<p>

"Idiot, get away!" I heard him snap at me from behind.

I ignored him, watching the boy regain his footing and bare his blade.

>"Kaoru, right? I can imagine you're also the little shit that gave Souji the *Ochimizu*." My hand shook as I gripped the hilt.

He gritted his teeth and lunged at me; I blocked him, knocking him away. "Why're you shaking? Or are you that anxious to save that ****pathetic fool**** behind you?" He growled.

I growled and lunged, being met with his katana as he caught my lunge; I glowered into his brown eyes, kneeing him in the belly and shoving him back.

He spat out a wad of spittle, glowering up at me. "Bitch," he spat.

>I huffed. "If you hurt him **one more time**, I'll cut your head off, you little ****bastard****!" I snarled, flying forward.

****No****!" Souji shouted behind me.

We grazed each other, his blade narrowly cutting my shoulder and my own blade narrowly cutting his cheek.

>I landed on my feet rather clumsily, panting softly, glowering over my shoulder at him as he wiped the blood from his cheek.<p>

"How dare you cut the face of an oni?!" He snarled, reeling on me and disappearing.

I widened my eyes.

>The air stilled at my back as I felt a cold blade point poke the part of my back where my heart was.<p>

"Kawa-chan!" Chizuru exclaimed.

>"It's as I said, Chizuru; weaklings only live so they can be killed." Kaoru sneered behind me.<p>

I met Souji's green eyes and smiled despite feeling the slightest twinge of fear shoot down my spine, remembering that day he'd sworn to protect me, the day he'd given me my haori.

Souji, I love you...

The sound of a blade cutting into flesh ripped me from my reverie; I widened my eyes again.

>The blade point fell from my back, surprising me further; I looked over my shoulder alertly.<p>

He grimaced and glowered up at his assailant, the blade protruding grotesquely from his chest. "Kazama Chikage...!" He spat.

"Forgetting an oni's honor and dirtying the Yukimura name is unforgivable." A familiar voice growled behind the boy before the blade yanked out from his chest cavity.

The boy fell face-forward; a pair of arms pulled me away and into someone's chest, the arms holding me protectively to the beating heart.

I knew those arms.

I looked over my shoulder, glancing up at the clenched-teeth-expression he wore, at his burning green eyes. "Kazama, why?" I demanded quietly as the boy died before his sister.

He sheathed his katana, glaring slightly at me, at Souji. "I suppose you've heard: Kodou has left the Satsuma Clan and betrayed demonkind. We'll have to kill him." He stated, his words meant for the girl.

We watched him turn about and leave, walking away further into the wood.

>She looked down at her brother before running after him.<p>

I watched her go, quieting and sinking to my knees.

"Kawa," he kneeled with me, keeping his hands on my shoulders.

I looked up at his green eyes and felt my shoulders shake, closing my eyes tightly as I pulled him closer, wrapping my arms around his neck.

>Souji quieted and held onto me tightly, groaning softly as he knotted a hand's fingers in my black hair.<p>

"You're still an idiot, scaring me like that." I chided into his neck.

>He seemed to laugh softly. "Sorry. Guess I've been doing that a lot lately, haven't I?" He wondered.<p>

I laughed weakly. "Idiot letch," I scolded softly.

Souji seemed to smile, planting a kiss on the top of my head.

"Beautiful princess," he replied in a gentle tone.

I blushed a little, looking at him as he held my hands in his.

>"Can you stand?" He asked.<p>

I nodded, letting him get up first before I gripped his hands in mine and helped myself up.

>"Are you alright, Kondou-san?" I asked, pulling away from my friend to go help him up.<p>

Kondou-san nodded, smiling at me. "Yes; Yasakawa-kun, that was some show. It's a wonder you're related to Toshi," he mused proudly.

I felt my cheeks burn as I heard Souji snicker behind me. "Honestly, Kondou-san," I grumbled.

We looked at the boy. "What do we do?" I wondered, indicating the body.

>"I'm all for leaving him for bird food," Souji mused bitingly, kicking the body with his toe.<p>

"We'll bury him, Souji." Kondou-san decided.

I made a face. "As much as I'd love to do that, Kondou-san's right.

We need to bury him." I declared, jabbing my friend in the ribs lightly.

He pouted at me; I couldn't help but giggle.

:::::::::oOo:::::::::

It was nightfall by the time we finished burying Kaoru.

I looked up to see Chizuru come back, smiling. "Chizu-chan, are you alright?" I asked as she came forward.

>She nodded, smiling for me. "Hai, I'm okay. Thank you for earlier, Kawa-chan," she said.<p>

I shrugged and nodded. "It wasn't much. Toshi, he asked me to take care of you, while he was away. You know how he is." I pointed out, smiling.

"Way too well," Souji mused as he slung an arm around my waist lightly.

>I looked up at him and pouted, ribbing him again. "Noone asked yer opinion," I huffed.<p>

He chuckled and lifted a lock of my hair. "Your hair," he began quietly.

I looked up at him again and lowered my gaze. "You hate it." I guessed.

Souji squeezed my waist. "Nah, it fits you. Makes you look twice as gorgeous." He mused gently.

>My cheeks burned and I looked away. "Shut up," I muttered.<p>

He chuckled again. "Princess," he mused softly.

* * *

><p>He looked up at me as I carried the trays. "Missionary work again?" He wondered, his tone teasing.<p>

I felt my cheeks burn and huffed. "Shut up, I'm just bein' nice. Don't get huffy either." I added knowingly.

>Hajime rolled his eyes. "I won't. Have fun, and give him our best." He said, smiling softly at me.<p>

I nodded and returned the smile. "Right," I winked before turning to take the trays of food down the pathway.

>It was almost like that day back in December, before the battle of Toba-Fushimi.<p>

I knocked on his door. "Oi, you awake?" I wondered.

>"It's open," he replied.<p>

I set down the tray to slide the door open, putting both trays down inside the room before stepping inside his room, keeping the door cracked open.

He sat up in bed, his green eyes curious. "To what do I owe the pleasure of havin' a gorgeous nurse like you come visit me?" He

wondered lightly, a smirk playing at his lips.

I felt my cheeks warm up and I huffed again, tossing my hair back as I handed him his tray. "Just eat." I chided patiently, sitting down at his side and inwardly saying thanks for the meal before I started on the fish.

He seemed to smile as he also started eating, looking over at my tray and seeming to notice the bottle of sake sitting there. "What's the sake for, planning on getting me hammered?" He wondered, perking my ears.

I rolled my eyes and poured him some sake in a cup, placing it on his tray before pouring myself some. "Not anytime soon. It's celebratory," I replied around a clump of rice.

He raised a brow. "What're ya celebrating? I thought we lost," he mused.

THWACK.

"For you bein' alive, obviously. The others too." I said patiently, sipping from my cup.

He rubbed the bump on his head gingerly, pouting at me before huffing. "Y'know, I actually missed havin' you brain me." He mused quietly, perking my ears.

I blushed slightly and smiled warmly at him, pouring myself another shot. "Really? Maybe I should do it again since ya missed it so much," I mused.

He rolled his eyes and caught my wrist, squeezing it gently. "Once is good enough for today, princess," he assured me.

I quieted and nodded, smirking gently. "I missed you, y'know." I said quietly, perking his ears.

>Souji looked at me and his green eyes softened; he released my wrist to run his fingers through my hair, stroking it gently.
"I missed you too." He replied in the same tone.

I cleared my throat and downed the second shot, returning to my food.

>He seemed to smile as he also paid more attention to his food.<p>

We ate in companionable silence.

He didn't question why I'd decided to celebrate with him; he was smart enough to know that my reason was that I missed his company, that I missed him teasing me or I missed scolding him.

No matter what he was â€" human or Fury â€" Okita Souji was my best friend.

There was nothing in the world that was going to change that.

* * *

><p>AN: _and so ends the chapter. there's more to come, so don't

fret, 'kay?_

you lot know the drill, yeah? thanks~

15. Prologue 02: Toy Soldiers

A/N: _short chapter again. sorry! /bows rather major event going down in the upcoming chapter so this is another prologue._
>also, if you're wondering on the title, "***Like Toy Soldiers***"_ is by_ **Eminem** _(this song reminded me Toshi : 'D). anyway, enjoy the chap!_

disclaimer: i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me.

* * *

><p>Chapter 15: Prologue 02: Toy Soldiers***

"I do not intend to create any more Fury henceforth." He stated with that stern expression he often wore, his arms crossed at his chest.

I looked at him, sipping my tea; it was bad enough that Toshi was a Fury like Souji, Heisuke and Sannan-san.

>My eyes glanced over to Hajime sitting at my side; I looked down and crossed my arms at my chest, mirroring my brother.<p>

If Hajime were to turn into a Furyâ€¦ I didn't want to think about it.

>I loved Hajime, so if his life were endangered like everyone else's life who had drank that damn Ochimizu, I couldn't bear it.

"This is unacceptable! With Harada-kun and Nagakura-kun gone, it is of the utmost importance that we strengthen our forces!" Sannan-san's voice stirred my from my reverie.

"True, enlarging the Fury corps is the quickest way to strengthen our forces." Toshi mused.

"But why?" He snapped.

"There's a major flaw with the Fury; I received this information from a reliable source." He replied sharply, perking my ears.

>I looked at him curiously.<p>

"A flaw?" Sannan-san repeated.

"The Fury get their power from their own life force. In other words, the more power they use, the shorter their lives become." Toshi explained gravely.

>My eyes widened.<p>

"Nii-san," I began in surprise.

So if Souji continued to use his powersâ€¦ My shoulders shook as a tremor of revulsion shook me.

>I looked down at my hands in my lap to see they were trembling; the black fingerless gloves tightened as I balled my hands into

fists.<p>

"There you have it: it doesn't hurt to avoid using your powers unless you absolutely must." Toshi declared.

"That's more incentive for me to continue my research. Fixing that flaw will help you now that you've become a Fury!" Sannan-san snapped.

"If you keep working on that research, more humans will unnecessarily become Fury. It's not worth letting innocent lives get caught in your obsession." I spoke up patiently, meeting his sharp brown eyes with hard gray eyes.

"Yasakawa-kun," he began angrily.

"Just because ****you**** suffered doesn't mean you have to force my brother to suffer like you. Or Heisuke... or Souji." I stated sternly, glaring at him as the memories of that night Souji became a Fury, the day at Toba-Fushimi flooded back to me.

Toshi glanced at me; I leaned back into the wall, looking down at the katana in my lap and saying nothing more.

>I felt Hajime's eyes on me; I kept my gaze down on the blue fabric of my katana, seeing my hand on the sheath shaking a little.

"â€¦ As such, the Shinsengumi will move to Aizu." Toshi spoke, perking my ears.

Aizu Territory?

>"But that's Lord Katamori's land," Heisuke mused; he seemed to smirk. "That's just what the Shinsengumi need to kick back to gear." He said lightly.<p>

"The lord of Aizu isn't going to let us go to waste." Toshi said, sounding like he'd smirked.

>I felt a smile form on my lips.<p>

Aizu: they didn't really like us, since the Ikedaya incident four years ago.

>But then again, they were old fashioned compared to the Shinsengumi.<p>

I'd like to hope they wouldn't let little differences like that dissuade the need to combine forces.

* * *

><p>It was another day in spring, May if I had to guess. I guess since the battle of Toba-Fushimi, I'd lost track of what month or day it was.<p>

"Kawa," he spoke behind me as I started to pull my vest on.

I looked over my shoulder to meet his familiar blue eyes; I turned about to meet his eyes. "Hajime, what's wrong?" I wondered.

He looked troubled for a moment before he looked at my shirt.

"Hijikata-san asked that I train the new recruits and go ahead of

him." He informed.

I nodded. "Yeah, I was going to get ready to go with youâ€¦" I began to reply.

"You're staying with Hijikata-san." He stated, surprising me.

My eyes widened slightly; I quieted and scowled stubbornly at him. "But Hajime," I started.

"I don't want you to get caught in the crossfire if there's a battle. If anything happens, you're to stay with your brother and Kondou-san." He explained with hardened blue stones.

I looked down at my hands to see they were shaking a little; I glared up at him. "But I want to go with you." I said softly.

His shoulders slumped a little; he reached for my vest, helping me button it. "I know you do; I know you too well. But I don't want you to die out there because of me." He stated softly, perking my ears.

I shook my head, holding his hands that finished buttoning my vest, squeezing his fingers. "Come back to me, then. Don't you dare pull some stupid stunt. You got it?" I pleaded, looking up at him with hard eyes.

Hajime's eyes softened at my request; he nodded. "I will. Someone has to be around to keep you from acting reckless, if not your brother." He mused quietly.

My cheeks warmed; I released his hands to throw my arms around his neck, hugging him tightly.
>He groaned softly and held me to his chest, digging his fingers into my waist as I felt his chin rest on my shoulder.<p>

"Saitou-san!" A voice declared from the pathway.

He cursed quietly, kissing my neck before pulling away reluctantly, meeting my gray eyes.

I kissed him hard, hearing him groan my name before he crushed his lips against mine just as hard.

Hajime pulled out of my arms gingerly, smiling softly and cupping my cheek. "Don't be reckless." He ordered.
>I smiled despite feeling like I should've pouted, nodding. "Just come back to me." I replied softly.<p>

He pushed my hair back gently, kissing my forehead in a tender way, before he pulled away to walk out of my room.
>I watched him leave and sighed, rubbing my arm gingerly.<p>

You'd better come back to me, Saitou Hajime. I mean it.

* * *

><p>AN: __just a little Hajime/Kawa fluff for you lot who ship this pairing just as much as i do. :'D_

you know the drill, yeah? thanks~

16. Time to Run, to Fight, to Bleed

A/N: _here's the chapter i promised! i think i made Kawa out to look stronger in this chapter than in previous chaps. anyway, enjoy!_

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 16: Time to Run, to Fight, to Bleed_

I skimmed through the '_Story of the Three Kingdoms_' book, smiling a little. "I've barely heard of this story." I mused, perking his ears.

"Really?" His light brown eyes seemed to soften. "You mentioned once that you were living in a temple for a few months, before Toshi took you in. Did you read anything like it?" He asked.

I shook my head.

>"Not really. The monk there, he didn't see it wise for 'a young woman like myself' to read such stories. I was only twenty years old, so I would argue it or storm away like a child." I smiled sheepishly. "Old habits die hard, huh?" I wondered, rubbing behind my neck.<p>

Kondou-san laughed slightly. "Don't I know it." He looked at me with a slightly sad glint in his eyes.

>"The monk wasn't wrong, though. Yasakawa-kun, how you ever managed to fight your way through a dojo as a child, or survive living with the Shinsengumi for so long, I don't know. I will say that it's very brave of you, as a young woman, to do that and not give up on your family." He mused, perking my ears.<p>

I looked down at the book in my hands, smiling softly. "I guess it's that Hijikata blood Toshi and I share. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here." I said quietly, straightening from sitting next to him to hand him the book back.

Kondou-san smiled at me. "Perhaps it's that." He said thoughtfully, looking down at the other books scattered on his desk.

>I nodded and looked out the window at the green wood around us.<p>

"I'm coming in!" Her voice sounded, perking my ears; we both looked up to see Chizuru coming up the stairs with a tray of tea in her hands. "I brought some tea." She declared.

"Oh, Yukimura-kun! Thanks as always." Kondou-san smiled lightly at her as she set the tray down.

"What're you reading?" She asked, looking at the books.

>"'The Story of the Three Kingdoms' and '_Kiyomasa-ki_' ; they're just literary stories. I've read them so many times I've memorized them." He said rather sheepishly as she placed the cups on

the desktop.

I smiled slightly at him, taking my cup and sipping the tea.

Maybe it really was the same determination and stubbornness Toshi had that kept me going this long. It's probably why I was the only girl in a dojo full of boys when I was littleâ€¦

"Kondou-san, are you up there?!" My brother's shout jarred me from my reverie; I looked up alertly and put the cup down, my hand flying to the hilt of my katana.

"What's wrong, Toshi?" Kondou-san asked as we saw him and Shimada-san race up the stairs to come to a halt before us.

>"Prepare to leave immediately; the enemy has us surrounded." Toshi reported, perking my ears.<p>

I lessened my grip on the hilt. "'Surrounded'?" I repeated.

"There's two or three hundred of them. I came in through the back entrance so they didn't notice me." Shimada-san added as he looked out the window.

I stood next to him and widened my eyes slightly to see there were four rows of soldiers marching around the perimeter of the building.

>"Shit," I grumbled, looking at my brother. "Nii-san, what do we do?" I asked.<p>

"We could handle them if there weren't so many," Toshi mused, looking out the window and scowling. "We don't have enough time to wait for Saitou to come back." He grumbled, looking at Shimada-san. "Shimada, I'll handle things here; take Chizuru, Kawa and Kondou-san and get away." He ordered.

"You can't, there's too many even for you!" Chizuru protested.

"I'm not leaving you behind, Toshi." I chimed sternly, meeting his violet eyes. "Besides, you can't move around as much during the day." I added.

"We'll never know that until we try," he declared as he made to run off.

"Wait a minute," Shimada-san grabbed his shoulder from behind, making him look at him over his shoulder. "The enemy troops were carrying guns." He pointed out.

Kondou-san pulled away from his desk to stand before us. "Toshi, there's no need for you to go. I'll go to the enemy camp." He proclaimed, smiling his usual kind smile.

We looked at him in surprise.

>"Kondou-san," I began.<p>

"What're you talking about, Kondou-san?! You'd be going to your death!" Toshi exclaimed indignantly.

"Of course I won't tell them I'm Kondou of the Shinsengumi. If I tell them we're a pacification unit sent by the Shogun's vassal, it should

buy you enough time to escape." Kondou-san explained calmly.

"Don't be stupid; they'll see right through that!" He barked.

"Assuming they do, I'm still a daimyo. It won't be easy for them to kill me." He replied.

"But that won't matter to them! Once they figure out you're who you are, they'll have your head." I piped up, looking at him for some sort of reasonable answer.

"You're being naïve; those bastards don't give a shit about titles bestowed by the old Bakufu! I won't die so long as they don't pierce my heart. It would be better if I bought time!" Toshi snarled.
>I winced at the mental image of seeing him die, clenching my fists.<p>

"Unacceptable: no matter what you say, I'm going to draw the enemy's attention." Kondou-san stated stubbornly, looking stern. "I've made up my mind, Toshi."

"Cut the crap! What'll happen when we lose our leader?! I'll see to it you escape even if I have to tie you up! Your body no longer belongs to just you, Kondou Isami." He exclaimed angrily.

He scowled at him, slightly surprising me; I'd never seen him look as determined and pained as he did today. "Then this is an order! Lieutenant Hijikata, take all soldiers stationed here and join up with the Ichikawa army!" He proclaimed.

He was quieter when he spoke again. "You're ordering me..?" He asked, lowering his gaze briefly. "What the hell do you think you're doing..?" He demanded quietly.

He smiled again. "Aren't the Captain's orders absolute?" He wondered. "Or are you different, having made others become Fury or disembowel themselves over this?" He asked.
>I looked up at my brother, looking at Kondou-san again.<p>

Why was he willing to surrender to the Satcho for us? Was it mercy? Or did he really care so much that he was willing to be beheaded to make sure we survived an ambush? Kondou-san...!

"Lieutenant, let's go." Shimada-san urged as he placed a hand on his shoulder.

He smiled at my brother again. "Toshi let me be at peace." He said kindly.

I looked at my brother, looking down at his hands at his sides and taking his left hand gently. "Toshi," I whispered, feeling a lump of tears form in my throat.

If I felt horrible about this, I knew Toshi felt a thousand times worse than I did. He'd been with Kondou-san longer than he'd known me, even looked up to him as a brother-figure.

Nii-san.

"Yasakawa, stay with Chizuru and wait for me." He ordered, perking my ears.

I looked at him to see him about to rush downstairs; I nodded. "Be careful." I replied quietly, watching him nod before he sprinted downstairs.

>I looked down at my hands to see they were shaking again.<p>

His smiling green eyes flashed in my mind.

Souji.

I closed my eyes tightly for a second. I'm sorry, Souji. I hope you'll forgive me.

"Kondou-san, escape with us! Hijikata-san, Kawa-chan and Shimada-san want you to." Chizuru spoke up, stirring me from another reverie.

I looked at her, looking at Kondou-san again.

"I can't; if I say I'll escape, Toshi will turn into a Fury and risk his life fighting hundreds of soldiers." He declined. "The more he uses his Fury powers, the shorter Toshi's life becomes, right? I can't sacrifice him for my own survival." He mused, looking out the window.

"Kondou-san," I said quietly, surprised that he'd been listening in at the meeting.

He sort of laughed. "Besides, Yasakawa-kun would kill me for allowing her brother to die because of me." He added.

I blinked and then shook my head. "Kondou-san, please. Toshi is blood, but losing you is a worse thing to bear. You're the Commander of the Shinsengumi; we all looked up to you." I declared, feeling the lump make my throat ache.

He looked at me and his eyes softened; he lifted a hand to plant on my head, ruffling my hair. "Not everything in life has a happy ending, Yasakawa-kun." He said quietly.

I closed my eyes as I felt the tears well in the corners of my eyes, stinging my cheeks. "Kondou-san," I said weakly.

"Yasakawa-kun, I want you to do me one last favor." He requested, perking my ears; I looked up at him, seeing that his brown eyes were sad, nodding a little.

>"What is it?" I asked quietly.<p>

"Tell Souji that I'm sorry." He replied in the same tone.

>I quieted and nodded, feeling the tears fall down my cheeks.

"H-hai." I said.

Kondou-san ruffled my hair again before his hand dropped from my head. "It has been an honor and privilege to live alongside a brave young woman like yourself, Yasakawa-kun." He admitted.

I felt the tears threaten to fall again; I sniffed and smiled weakly. "I feel the same for you, Kondou-san." I replied, my voice cracking.

>He smiled his usual kind smile one last time.<p>

* * *

><p>"Who's there?!" A man's voice barked in the distance. "Hey, you!"<p>

I drew my katana, glowering in the direction the voice came from, perking up as we looked at the hill ahead to see at least thirty soldiers standing there; the one in the lead who'd spoken drew his katana.

"What the hell're you doing here?!" The man barked, katana in hand as three of his men aimed their firearms at us.

"Shimada, I'll handle things here. Get everyone out of enemy territory!" Toshi ordered.

>I looked at him alertly. "Toshi," I began.<p>

"Very well." Shimada replied, nodding to the rest of the men around us as they took off into the forest.

"Freeze; we'll shoot if you don't freeze!" The main soldier commanded.

"Yasakawa, stay back." He spoke, perking my ears.

"But, Toshi," I began again.

"That's an order." He snapped, quieting me; I lowered my gaze and nodded reluctantly, glowering up at the soldiers.

>My hand shook on the hilt of my katana as he gave a battle cry and sprinted forward into the fray.

"Hijikata-san, don't do it! Don't use your powers!" Chizuru cried.

>"Shut up; keep your mouth shut!" He snarled as his hair became snow-white again and he attacked.<p>

I shut my eyes tightly. "Damn it. Stay here, Chizuru," I snapped, grunting and sprinting after his charge.

"Kawa-chan, don't!" She exclaimed behind me.

>I heard bullets going off; I dodged one that whizzed past my ear, lunging at the gunman and cutting his throat open, forcing him to drop.<p>

My foot propelled into another soldier's chest as my katana stabbed into his forehead, blood flying from the injury as he fell and I landed on my feet.

"Kawa, ****MOVE****!" Toshi shoved me out of the way as another soldier fired and hit his shoulder.

****NO****!" I cried, throwing my wakizashi at the gunman's head, hitting his forehead and making him drop.

Two more bullets flew past me, one making a hit as it hit his stomach.

>"Nii-san!" I barked, yelping when he shoved me out of the way again, attacking the gunmen with renewed fire.<p>

Toshi. I looked at him as he slaughtered at least four more gunmen before another three guns went off, four men lunging at him with their katana in hand.

I flew past him, swinging my katana at one belly, slamming my foot into the neck of another, forcing them both to fall back.

Damn these bastards. They were the reason Souji was a Fury, they were the reason Kondou-san was going to die! Damn them to hell!

One soldier lunged at me with his katana raised high; I landed on my back, grunting and propelling a foot into his jaw, knocking him away as I scrambled to my feet, katana in hand as I sliced his throat open.

I was the She-Wolf of Mibu. With my blade, I would rip apart each and every bastard that stood in the way of my family!

A sharp pain shot through my right arm; I cried out reflexively before I kned the soldier in his gut, forcing him down.
>My *katana* stabbed sharply into his forehead before I yanked the blade out and looked at my bleeding right arm, lifting a hand to grip the torn sleeve gingerly.

Two more soldiers lunged at me with their katana; I dropped my hand to my side and flew forward, kicking one in the jaw and leaping over him, doing a small backflip as I rammed my blade into the heart of the second soldier.

His body broke my fall; my hands shook as my chest heaved, panting as I glowered down into the surprised face of the dead soldier.
>I got off his body, my shoulders shaking slightly as I looked about to see my brother had decimated the rest of the soldiers.<p>

"Are you alright?" He asked me, making me look over my shoulder to see his Fury form staring at me.

I nodded, holding my arm gingerly, meeting his red eyes; I lifted my good hand to stroke his cheek slightly, feeling the tears threaten to fall again. "Never better." I mused with a weak smile.

Toshi smiled sadly, gripping my hand in his own and letting his Fury hair and eyes fade, being replaced with his jet black hair and violet eyes. "I'm sorry I dragged you out here." He apologized quietly.

I pulled my hand free to rub my bleeding arm gingerly. "It's not your fault, stop apologizing." I reminded.

He quieted and nodded, stepping closer to fold his arms on my back, holding me close; I blinked before smiling softly, hugging him tightly and closing my eyes as the tears fell.

"I've never seen you fight with such strength. I'm impressed," he said quietly, perking my ears.

I smiled again and shrugged. "Been living with you for four years, so something obviously rubbed off." I mused.

>Toshi almost chuckled, seeming to smirk. "She-Wolf of Mibu, indeed," he mused.<p>

My cheeks warmed; I pulled out of his arms to gently punch him. "Shut up, _Oni_ Fukutaichou." I scolded, pursing my lips.

He chuckled, grimacing and holding his stomach. "Ow," he muttered; my eyes fell to the bullet wounds on his stomach and shoulder and I winced.

"Sorry," I mumbled, rubbing my arm again.

"It's not your fault." He replied, perking my ears.
>I nodded slightly and smiled.<p>

Typical Toshi.

* * *

><p>AN: _i almost wanted to cry at seeing the scene where Kondou-san gave his swords over in surrender. it's not fair that the Imperialists did that, the damn bastards. anyway, more drama coming up so stay tuned!_

until then, you lot know the drill, yeah? thanks~

17. Prologue 03: Burnt Castles Falling

A/N: _in case you're wondering on the opening scene, it's from the battle at Utsunomiya castle where the Bakumatsu tried to take it from the New Government army. just an FYI. other than that, enjoy the chap!_

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 17: Prologue 03 - Burnt Castles Falling_

The smoke rose up from the burning castle like as if from a great furnace.

I sprinted as fast as I could, leaving Shinpachi and Shimada-san behind as I leaped over a dead soldier, landing slightly clumsily on my feet as I entered the main foyer.

Flames burned brilliantly around me; I coughed and covered my mouth with my sleeve. ****Toshi****! I cried, hearing Shinpachi and Shimada-san follow me inside.

"Hijikata-san!" Shinpachi exclaimed.

I looked at the opened room ahead of me and sprinted down the hall, hearing them follow at my heels, coughing from the smoke.

>"Toshi!" I shouted, looking past the bright flames to the rest of the burning room, rushing past the flames further into the room.

A figure lay on the floor nearby; I grunted and leaped over a small fence of flame, landing next to the figure and turning him over.

>My eyes widened as I looked at his injuries that bled freely.<p>

"Toshi, wake up!" I exclaimed, shaking him worriedly.
>He opened his eyes, looking up at me blearily. "K-Kawa," he grimaced, sitting up and looking down at his wounds.<p>

I smiled in relief, looking over my shoulder. "Shinpatsu, Shimada-san!" I called.

Both men came in quickly and helped me get him to his feet.
>We hurried out of the room and out of the burning foyer into the clean air of the afternoon.<p>

Both Shimada-san and Shinpachi coughed for air as I panted and coughed; Toshi fell to his knees, coughing and hacking for air.

>"Nii-san," I kneeled next to him, rubbing his back soothingly as he slowly regained his breath.<p>

His violet eyes looked up at me past locks of black hair. "Kawa," he coughed, grimacing and bowing his head as his injuries seemed to act up, his left hand lowering to grab his side as blood seeped from between his fingers.

I helped him stand, looking at Shinpachi as he lifted his right arm over his shoulder, seeing him nod.

We started the way back to camp, Shimada-san at our back as we carried my brother.

* * *

><p>The sound of a desk being put up stirred me.<p>

I opened an eye to see an amber light shining in the corner of my eye, looking around with both eyes to see him sitting up with a brush in hand and a paper on the desk.

"Nii-san," I grumbled, sitting up from having slept near the door, looking down at the blanket that was coiled around my legs; I smiled a little, brushing some hair back.

He looked over at me and seemed to smile. "Glad you're awake." He mused.

I stretched my arms and yawned.
>"How long was I out?" I asked, lifting a hand to rub my neck gingerly.<p>

He shrugged. "A few hours. I'm surprised you stayed behind, with me." He replied.

I shrugged back and folded the blanket, scooting forward to sit next to him and place the folded blanket next to me. "You're my brother. I have to worry about you, if Chizu-chan isn't around." I said

patiently.

Toshi quieted and his eyes softened; he looked down at the paper before him, writing something.

>"You're getting to be very endearing, nowadays." He noted, perking my ears as I shrugged my vest on, buttoning the first three buttons.<p>

My cheeks warmed and I pouted. "Don't patronize me. You're lucky you're still recuperating from your injuries, otherwise I'd brain you for that comment." I remarked as I finished buttoning my vest.

He fought a grin at my words, shaking his head. "Always the spitfire," he mused.

>I huffed and rolled my sleeves up, smirking. "I'm related to you, remember?" I pointed out.<p>

He looked at me and his eyes tightened a little. "You don't look like you've gotten enough rest." He said thoughtfully.

I shrugged and stifled another yawn. "I've been helping Chizuru take care of you; and even when she went to sleep in her room, I stayed in here with you to make sure you slept okay." I explained quietly, lowering my gaze to my lap.

Toshi smiled softly, looking down at the paper. "That would explain why I felt as if a wolf was sleeping in the same room." He mused more to himself.

I blinked and then smiled, running a hand through my hair. "Shut up, idiot." I scolded, looking up at him with one open gray eye.

He rolled his eyes, looking down at the paper and writing something.

>I smiled at him. I was glad that he was alright, even if he was still recuperating.<p>

"How exactly did you get those injuries; or was it him again?" I wondered, referring to Kazama.

His brow folded into a frown and he nodded, scribbling something down. "It was him; he used some "demon-slaying" blade. Wherever he got it from, it works on Fury just as well as it would on _oni_." He explained.

I nodded slightly and looked down at my lap. "'Demon-slaying blade', huh? Talk about ironic, an _oni_ wielding such a blade. God only knows he's trying not to give himself a nick with that thing." I mused, aiming at a joke.

Toshi smirked at that, huffing. "It'd save me a world of relief," he chimed.

I chuckled and smiled a little, looking at the door. "I hope Hajime comes back safely." I mused quietly, perking his ears.

He looked at me. "I figured there was something going on between you two." He said thoughtfully.

>My cheeks warmed and I smiled humbly. "Yeah, there is." I replied.<p>

"You look happy with him." He said, perking my ears; I looked up and met his violet eyes.

I smiled wider and laughed, rubbing behind my neck. "He makes me happy. Said he loves me." I added humbly.

Toshi mirrored me and smiled softly. "Is that right?" His eyes softened again, thoughtfully.

>"I've known Saitou for a long time, even before we started the Shinsengumi. I'm glad that he finally has someone to fight for." He mused.<p>

I blushed again and brushed my hair back, lowering my gaze. "Iâ€| He's someone I have to fight for, too." I said quietly.
>He glanced up at me before nodding a little, scribbling something else on the paper.<p>

The door slid open behind me, perking my ears; I looked up to meet the slightly surprised brown eyes of Chizuru.

>"K-Kawa-chan, you're awake." She said in relief.<p>

I smiled lightly; _just how long was I out?_ I wondered.

>"Yeah, I've been up for a few minutes talking with Toshi." I replied with a nod.<p>

She smiled at me before she turned to him. "Hijikata-san, you shouldn't be up! You nearly died." She declared, moving forward into the room.

"Who 'nearly died'? My injuries weren't that bad." He remarked, cutting his gaze to the side.

I covered my mouth to hide a grin. "The hell they weren't; you were basically knocked out when Shinpatu and I carried you back to camp." I corrected lightly.

He eyed me pointedly. "Just whose side are you **on**, Kawa?" He grumbled.

I giggled and smiled lightly.

>"Quit complainin', nii-san; keep it up and we're barring you in here for another month." I teased.<p>

Toshi made a face similar to a pout, making me laugh softly.

>Chizuru smiled slightly, looking down at the haori she carried in hand.

>"At any rate, you should put this on; you're going to get sick!" She declared, moving forward to place the haori over his shoulders.

"Please go back to bed once you've finished that paperwork. Don't think you can work behind my back, either! Kawa-chan and I are going to keep a close eye on you." She added, sitting down next to me.<p>

I sweatdropped and smiled patiently at her.

"I'm sorry I've put you out. Both of you." He apologized, smiling rather sheepishly.

She blushed slightly; I glanced at her and smiled, lifting a hand to ruffle her hair.

>"It's okay, nii-san. We're used to it, neh, Chizu-chan?" I assured him, looking at her.<p>

Her cheeks burned again and she nodded. "_H-hai_, we're used to it." She replied, smiling sheepishly.

Toshi rolled his eyes. "Honestly, Kawa..." he began.

The door slid open behind us.

>"Lieutenant!" Shimada-san declared, slightly spooking the girl.<p>

"Hijikata-kun, are you sure you should be up?" The boy, Otori Keisuke, wondered as he followed Shimada-san inside the room.

"Yeah, I see you came too, Otori-san; thanks for everything." Toshi replied.

>"Thank God, I feared the worst." Shimada-san said in relief.<p>

"I think we all did, Shimada-san." I offered lightly, looking at my brother. "But nothing can really keep down the infamous _Oni_ Fukutaichou, can it?" I mused, smiling.

He returned the smile and nodded. "Right."

"Pardon me, but I don't recall meeting such a lovely woman. What's your name?" Otori asked, looking at me.

I blinked before blushing slightly, smiling. "Hijikata Yasakawa. It's nice to actually meet you, Otori-kun." I replied warmly.

He returned the smile. "Likewise, Yasakawa-kun." He nodded.

I felt Toshi's eyes on me before I glanced at him and smiled sheepishly, rubbing my neck.

"Hijikata-kun, the way you fought at Utsunomiya was just like a demon god!" Otori declared in awe. "The soldiers' morale has sky-rocketed and everyone is singing praises about you. But the way you fought was an absolute failure as an advisor; it's most problematic." He added gravely.

"H-hey, Otori-san; the lieutenant is still injured, soâ€¦!" Shimada-san began warily.

I sweatdropped and smiled sheepishly. He was lucky my brother was still recuperating, otherwise he'd probably maim him for what he said.

"No, let me speak my mind!" He quieted him, looking at my brother again. "Now listen up, Hijikata-kun; the advisor is the leader. If a leader dies, we can't continue the fight even if his subordinates are still alive!" He stated.

Toshi quieted and huffed softly.

"Hey, Hijikata-kun, what's so funny? I'm quite serious about this!" Otori claimed, quieting briefly when he met my brother's gaze. "I-I

don't care what you say or how you threaten me, I'm not going to back down!" He barked.

>I widened my eyes slightly before smiling softly.<p>

This guy was bold to stand up before my brother; most men would back down easily.

"Yeah, I know, Otori-san. I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused you." He replied, his eyes softened.

I balked. "Nii-san," I said in surprise.

>What was up with him? I'd never seen him this way beforeâ€| Not even when Kondou-san wasâ€|<p>

"â€|I helped too!" A voice said before Nagakura Shinpachi poked his head into the room.

"Nagakura-san!" Chizuru declared in surprise.

>I huffed as he came to sit across from me. "Shinpatsu has a point, he did help Shimada-san and me." I said calmly.<p>

He huffed and smirked at me. "You look just fine," he said to my brother. "I shouldn't have worried about you." He mused.

"I haven't fallen far enough for you to worry about me, yet." Toshi remarked.

"You're the same as ever, Hijikata-san!" Shinpachi chuckled as both men laughed.

I smiled at them, almost imagining that it was like old times; everyone from the old groupâ€| I wish we could go back to that time, when things weren't as hellish as they are now.

"â€|A pity about Utsunomiya Castle." Shinpachi stirred me from my reverie. "You were so close."

I looked up and then lowered my gaze, nodding.

>"But I bet the Seikyoutai are rejoicing that you're okay." He mused; his eyes softened. "You can always reclaim a castle, but not a lost life. Isn't that right, Otori-san?" He said, looking at the young man.<p>

He blinked before nodding. "Right," he replied.

"You're right," Shinpachi said quietly, his own eyes softening.

"What is it?" He wondered.

"Nah, it's nothing; my unit is heading out first. I'll see you again in Aizu." He replied, straightening to his feet and looking at us.

I nodded, smiling at him. "Don't get yourself killed out there before we meet again, Shinpatsu." I advised lightly.

He rolled his eyes and smirked. "Yeah, yeah; just look after things for us around here, 'kay, She-Wolf?" He teased.

My cheeks burned slightly and I laughed sheepishly. "Shut up, and

tell Sano I said 'hi'." I remarked, waving him off.

Leave it to Shinpachi to still act like an idiot.

* * *

><p>AN: _prologue again. more drama coming up so stay tuned until then, yeah?_

_you lot know the drill; thanks~ _

18. Would You Kill (To Save Me)

A/N: _sorry about the wait. not much to put other than that, so enjoy._

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 18: Would You Kill (To Save Me)_

His hands tightened on his shoulders. "Why did you leave Kondou-san to die?!" He demanded angrily, clenching his teeth and glowering at him with burning green eyes. *****Say** something**!** He snapped.

I clucked my tongue and walked forward, hands at my sides balling into fists.

>THWACK**.

He pulled away, rubbing his head gingerly. "What theâ€|?" He growled, perking up when I stepped in between him and my brother, my arms folded across my chest as I acted as a blockade.

"Kawaâ€|" He began.

I glared up at him, my hands at my ribs curling into fists again. "Enough, Souji. Toshi's still healing from his injuries, so please don't hurt him." I declared, looking at him and feeling my glare falter as it was wont to do when I was around him; most of the time it was hard for me to stay mad at him for long.

He looked at my brother past me before he clenched his teeth again and grabbed my shoulders, surprising me. "Why didn't you stop him?" He demanded, looking at me imploringly, as if he expected me to answer every question he had regarding what happened.

I quieted and let my arms drop, looking up at him. "Heâ€| Kondou-san, he sacrificed himself for us. We were surrounded, and he gave himself up so we could escape." I explained, feeling his hands shake as they dug into my arms.

Souji gingerly released my arms, noticing the sliver of a scar on my right arm; his green eyes narrowed to resemble broken jade stones.

>"Kawa, youâ€| Damn it!" He jerked his gaze away from me to pull away and leave the courtyard.<p>

"Souji!" I called, watching him sprint away into the darkness,

feeling my stomach knot at seeing him look like that.

"Go after him," Toshi spoke quietly behind me, perking my ears; I looked at him and nodded, smiling weakly before I took off after his leave.

* * *

><p>"Souji!" I barked as I saw his silhouette yards ahead of me.
Haggard coughing sounded from him; he doubled over a little, holding something to his mouth.

I sprinted the last few yards between us, my hands grabbing his back gently as I rubbed his back soothingly. "Souji," I began worriedly.

He looked up at me with one open green eye, the coughing easing slowly as he pulled the handkerchief away from his mouth. "K-Kawa," he began hoarsely.

I ignored the blood staining the handkerchief in his hand, meeting his green eyes that were pained and worried, feeling a shudder roll down my spine at seeing him look so hurt.

I looked at him as he grabbed my arm, the same arm he'd seen my scar; he rolled the sleeve up to look at the scar I'd gotten from fighting those soldiers with Toshi.

"Damn it, Yasakawa," he growled under his breath.

I quieted and let him trace his finger gingerly along the thin scar on my arm. "There were too many for Toshi to handle on his own," I mused softly.

Souji cursed under his breath and pulled me forward to crush me to his chest; I blushed a little before I held onto him, burying my face into his neck as he knotted his fingers in my hair, burying his face into the spot between my neck and left shoulder.

"Souji," I began.

"Why did you do that? You reckless, beautiful woman, I told you that I'd be there to protect you. And it's because of your pain-in-the-ass brother you've got that scar." He scolded into my neck, his arms around my hips tightening as if in protection.

I closed my eyes and shook my head. "I know, Souji. I'm sorry that I got hurt," I replied softly.

His fingers dug into my ribs as he sighed. "I don't ever want to see you die, Kawa. It'd kill me to see your blood spilled on the ground instead of mine." He said sternly, surprising me at hearing him sound so serious again.

>I shivered again.<p>

"O-Okita-san!" A voice declared behind us, jarring him from his softened words; his arm tightened protectively on my waist before he relaxed, reluctantly letting me go. "Chizuru-chan," he greeted the girl.

I looked at her to see she was standing a ways behind, looking between us imploringly; my eyes softened and I crossed my arms at my chest habitually.

He seemed sad again; it was a vibe I could feel too easily from him. "I never thought Kondou-san would die before me." He mused more to himself.

>I winced, looking at him. "Souji, it's not your fault. I tried to get him to leave" I began to explain.<p>

"I know, Kawa." He quieted me; his tone lowered. "I know, you tried. You woulda bound-and-gagged 'im yourself if you could." He seemed bitter.

"Souji," I began softly.

"That day, when we found out we were surrounded, Hijikata-san said he would serve as his shield. And then Kondou-san alone surrendered so we could escape. Hijikata-san suffered, wondering why he was the one who survived. But now I think he's willing to die to protect the Shinsengumi, because Kondou-san entrusted it to him." Chizuru explained sadly.

I hugged my arms absently, looking at his back, vainly praying he'd say something before I shook it out of him; he'd never been this distraught before, and it made my heart ache painfully inside my chest.

"Kondou-san was always good at looking out for others," Souji mused. "When I was taken in as a live-in student at Sheikan Dojo, he cared for me even though I was a brat. He taught me how to use a sword." He quieted at the memory. "He was like a big brother to me. There was a certain someone who was closer to Kondou-san than me. He was selfish, self-important, clumsy, and did whatever he wanted" And now he's the only one capable of leading the Shinsengumi. But I don't think I can forgive him." He stated, perking my ears.

"He didn't mean to, Souji" I began quickly.

"I know he didn't." He quieted me rather curtly before his tone softened again. "I know, Kawa." He added softly.

"But that's why I'm leaving Hijikata-san to you, Chizuru-chan. And you too, Kawa." He stated, surprising me.

"Okita-san," Chizuru began softly.

>I widened my eyes slightly at hearing what he said.<p>

He wasn't

His retreating back jarred me from my thoughts.

>My hands balled into fists at my sides.<p>

"Souji, wait!" I barked, sprinting after him.

He wasn't serious.

>Tell me he was just playing a joke on us" On me.<p>

"Souji!" I exclaimed as he was walking farther away down the road.

He stopped walking, keeping his back to me. "Your brother's going to worry about ya." He pointed out as I dropped to grip my knees and regain my breath.

"You're not serious," I panted, straightening to stare at his back.

>His head dipped a little and he seemed to smirk. "'Fraid I am, princess." He said quietly.<p>

The tears threatened to sting the corners of my eyes. "Souji, don't." I pleaded.

His head lifted to stare up at the night sky. "I can't stay any longer around him, Kawa. Not after this." He stated.
>My hands at my sides shook.<p>

"Forget my brother, then! Souji, please." I cried, feeling the tear-lump try to clog my throat.

He quieted before he turned a little to look at me. "I know I said I'd protect you, that night when I drank the Ochimizu. And I really am sorry to leave you behind. But Iâ€¦ I can't handle being here anymore." He declared quietly, lowering his gaze.

I shook my head before I walked forward to grab his scruff, looking up at him as the tears threatened to take over. "Let me come with you, then. I-I'll leave Hajime, I'll go with you wherever the hell you wanna goâ€¦ Just don't leave me." I begged, clenching my teeth.

He smiled softly and gingerly pulled my hands from his shirt, holding them in his own grip gently. "You couldn't bring yourself to go through with it. I know you too well, Kawa. You can't leave a man who makes you smile. I won't put you through that pain. I don't want to see you die." He remarked.

The tears slowly fell down my cheeks, reminding me of hot streaks of sunlight. "Souji," I groaned.

Souji squeezed my hands, pulling me into his arms again; I buried my face into his chest, digging my nails into his back and vainly praying that I could keep him with me for the rest of my life.

His fingers ran through my hair gently as the tears slowly subsided, cradling the back of my head. "I love you, Kawa. I've always loved you, ever since we first met that day you came to live with us. And I don't ever want to see you cry for me. It hurts worse than any sword wound, or any of those damn silver bullets." His arm squeezed my hips tightly.

I sniffed. "Iâ€¦ I love you, too. And I don't wanna see you die. I said that I'd protect you, and I want to stay by your side." I croaked.

Souji kissed my hair, resting his cheek against my right temple.

>"Kawa, I know he'll protect you. He'd probably do a much better job of it than me. Besides, you've got a job to do; you've gotta look after your brother, and Chizuru-chan too. I can't let you leave

everything behind." He reminded softly, holding me close.<p>

I shook my head and looked up at his bright green eyes. "But Souji," I began weakly.

He smiled that easy cat-like smile of his I loved most, kissing my forehead. "I want you to look after Hijikata-san. Will you do it, for me?" He requested.

I nodded, lowering my gaze. "I will." I said.

Souji reluctantly let me go, making me ache to be back in his arms. "Here," he said as he reached inside his pants pocket for something small.

My eyes widened as I looked at the small trinket he held up: it was a jade green dagger pendant hanging by a silver chain.
>I looked up at him. "Souji," I said softly.<p>

He smiled again, gently lifting it over my head and helping me put it on. "Keep that safe for me. It's something I picked up, back in Osaka. It's not much, but I wanted to give it to you." He explained with a shrug.

I looked down at the charm before nodding; I threw my arms around him, kissing him.

Souji quickly gained his footing, holding my waist in his hands and groaning softly when our lips met; he kissed me lovingly, cupping my cheek and letting me pull away.

"I love it." I admitted softly.

He smiled his cat smile, lifting a hand to run his fingers through my hair. "Good, I was hoping you'd love it. It reminded me of you. Sharp as a blade and yet the princess I love more than anything." He mused.

I chuckled softly and smiled, lowering my gaze. "Do you have to leave?" I asked.

Souji's smile faltered a little and he nodded. "Yeah." He sighed and ruffled my hair, kissing my forehead. "But we might just meet again. Don'tcha think?" He wondered.

I nodded again and smiled lightly. "I hope so. I doubt I could handle missing you forever." I said.

He chuckled softly and ran his fingers through my hair, cupping my cheek. "I love you, Kawa." He said quietly, ducking to kiss me again.

I fought the tears that wanted to fall at hearing him say that, hugging his neck and kissing back. "I love you, too." I said softly.

Souji pulled away gingerly, giving me one last squeeze, before he stepped away from me.

I smiled for him, seeing him return the smile, flashing the cat smile

I loved.

He turned to continue walking down the darkened path, seeming to refuse to look back at me.

>I sighed heavily before I turned to retreat back to the camp.<p>

Souji, please live on. Live so we can meet again, one day.

* * *

><p>"Knock it off, you two!"<p>

I paused short of entering the courtyard at hearing Heisuke's voice; I inwardly groaned, sprinting forward and coming to a halt at seeing both Toshi and Hajime facing against each other, katana bared like teeth.

My hand flew to the hilt of my katana as I made to walk forward. "Toshi, Hajime, enough! You're in no condition to go on the front lines like that, nii-san." I added sternly, scowling from one samurai to the other.

"Keep out of this!" Toshi snapped; I quieted slightly and glared at him, widening my eyes when they fought, Hajime forcing him back so he landed against the larger building yards away.

"Toshi," I began, watching Hajime aim the point of his blade at his neck in triumph.

He relinquished his blade and drew back, letting me help my brother to his feet. "Aizu's battlefields aren't a playground where you can fight while still wounded. I believe I understand why you want to head out where the fighting is fierce. I can't allow you to go because I understand that." Hajime explained frostily.

I looked up at him. "Hajime," I said in surprise.

"In the midst of battle, you may forget about all your pain, but it would be troublesome if you forgot about it. You are the one who leads the Shinsengumi now. Please leave the battle on the frontline to us." He continued, ignoring me.

"I lead the Shinsengumiâ€|?" Toshi repeated more to himself.

"That's right; Hijikata-san, you're the commander now! Get it through your head!" Heisuke piped up as he walked forward.

He seemed to agree. "Very well; I'll let you take command at the front. At least until my injuries have healed." He told Hajime, sheathing his katana.

"Thank you very much," Hajime replied, also sheathing his blade. "Take care of Hijikata-san; don't let him out of your sight until he's recovered." He added, looking at Chizuru.

"I don't need a guard." Toshi grumbled.

>"Do too; otherwise you'll get injured again." Heisuke barked.<p>

Chizuru laughed quietly as a pout crossed my brother's face.

Hajime smiled in relief.

I smiled slightly at that, perking up at seeing his blue eyes; my cheeks warmed slightly and I smiled again, looking to my brother. "Gonna borrow Hajime-kun for a minute," I said lightly.

Toshi smirked slightly and nodded as the aforementioned man came forward to my side.

>"Oi, what's up with them?" Heisuke wondered as we walked away.<p>

"That's none of your concern, Heisuke," Toshi quieted him.

He must've shot him a look, because the boy shut up after he quieted him; I smiled in relief, looking up at Hajime as we walked farther away from the trio.

.....oO:.....

Once we were at my room, I threw my arms around him.

Hajime quickly gained his footing, a soft chuckle escaping him as he held me close, squeezing my waist tight.

>I buried my face into his neck, holding onto him.<p>

I loved Souji but I didn't love him as much as I loved Hajime.

He sighed quietly. "You reckless, beautiful woman, you're lucky you survived that ambush." He sounded like he was scolding.

I winced a little, resting my chin on his shoulder. "You heard about that," I mused.

His arms tightened reflexively. "Extensively." He pulled away a little to look at me with hardened blue eyes. "I left you behind so you wouldn't get into trouble, and you get into trouble regardless. Honestly, Kawaâ€¦ Sometimes I wonder if I should just tie your hands and feet together to make sure you don't act reckless." He scolded.

I felt my cheeks warm. "I know, I'm sorry. But Toshiâ€¦ He was against at least three hundred Satcho bastards, and he couldn't do it on his own." I explained.

"He told you to not interfere, and yet you interfered." Hajime sighed heavily before he ran a hand through my hair. "But he did mention you fought like the brave and fierce She-Wolf of Mibu that you are. And that was probably the only thing that gave me comfort." He admitted, perking my ears.

I looked up at him surprisedly, meeting his blue eyes to see there was relief slowly drowning out the anger that had surfaced minutes ago. "Really?" I wondered softly.

He nodded, smiling wryly. "Of course I had half a right mind to knock some sense into your head when he told me this, but so long as you're all right, I'm grateful for that." He mused.

I smiled slowly, nodding. "I missed you." I said, perking his ears.

Hajime smiled back and pushed my hair back, kissing my forehead. "I missed you too." He replied.

* * *

><p>"A guy with white hair was fighting against a bunch of ronin. It was a scary sight."

I sprinted as fast as I could towards the outskirts, my hands shaking at my sides.

>I knew just who 'the guy with white hair' was; only an idiot Fury like him would dare fight against so many ronin.<p>

Souji!

My feet skidded to a halt as I looked at the alley that hopefully led me to the outskirts.

>I looked over my shoulder to see the rising sun slowly trying to overtake the horizon.<p>

He wasn't going to last very long in broad daylightâ€¦|

I balled my hands into fists, picking up the pace as I ran down the alley, turning this way and that until I finally found the path leading to the outskirts that came dangerously close to the mountain.

"Souji," I whispered, looking down at the pendant around my neck, holding the dagger charm between my thumb and index finger; the dawn's light gleamed on the jade stone.

>My hand enclosed around the dagger before I took off, hurrying up the dirt path and away from the town.<p>

Souji please, don't do it! Don't you die on me!

:::::::::::oD::::::::::::

Dirt flew in my wake as I skidded to a halt; my eyes widened slightly.

Blood hung on the air, a soft mist stealing around the scene of carnage.

I slowly walked around the dead men's corpses, glancing at one or two of their bloody forms; I came to another halt as I saw a sword sticking up out of the ground hilt-side up.

My eyes focused on the red fabric of the katana.

>Tears started to well in the corner of my eyes.<p>

"**SOUJI**!" I shouted, calling for him, looking around for any sign of him. "**SOUJI**!" I cried, my voice echoing around me.

No answer.

My hands shook at my sides as the tears made my vision blurry.

I yanked the blade out of the ground, looking at the hilt to see there was a trailing strip of white cloth wrapped around the black part; dust dirtied the cloth.

The tears fell down my cheeks like hot streaks of sunlight; I sank to my knees, holding the katana close as a loud wail escaped me.

"**IDIOT**!" I screamed into the dawn, burying my face into the hilt of the katana as I sobbed like a baby, doubling over in pain as my world crashed around me.

His smiling green eyes flashed in my mind; '_I swear to you that the next time someone tries to hurt you, I'm gonna protect you, Kawa_.' His first promise after Ikedaya rang in my ears like a hollow din.

"Souji," I cried, shutting my eyes tight to pray that this was some sort of sick nightmare, that he was right behind me with those beautiful green eyes of his and that easy grin on his lips that made him look like a cat.

The distant sound of footsteps coming near made my eyes fly open; I clenched my teeth and scrambled to my feet, baring his katana like teeth as I glared at the bastard who dare try and kill me after killing Souji.

My eyes found both Chizuru and Toshi standing by the tree, looking at the scene around me in surprise.
>Toshi's violet eyes found me standing with the katana in hand and the preferable tear-stains on my cheeks. "Kawa?" He said in surprise.

Chizuru looked at me and her eyes looked sad. "Kawa-chan!" She said.

My shoulders shook a little as I lowered the katana, easing my stance. "Toshi," I replied, my voice sounding hoarse; I looked down at the katana in hand and looked at my brother again.

His eyes fell on the katana, on the red fabric of the hilt; they saddened, making him look much older than he originally was. "Souji," he said quietly.

"Isn't that Okita-san's sword?" Chizuru asked, looking up at him; I lowered my gaze to the katana and looked at the blood staining the blade.

When he didn't answer, she called out for him.

"I tried that." I spoke, meeting her brown eyes; the tears threatened to make my vision blurry again. "He's gone." I said softly, clenching the hilt tightly.

"It's Souji we're talking about. We don't need to worry about him." Toshi said, sounding like he was trying to ignore the facts.

"Nii-san," I began.

"Let's go." He said, turning to walk away.
>I looked at him and then looked down at the sword, at my tight grip on the hilt; his green eyes flashed in my mind.<p>

_Souji_â€|

I held the sword in hand, following my brother's leave.

'_I love you, Kawa_.'

I love you too, Souji. I always will.

* * *

><p>AN: _i was crying as i wrote the ending paragraph. i loved Souji he was such a goof, but he was a hell of a samurai. RIP, Okita Souji._
>more drama coming up so stay tuned, yeah? thanks~

19. Torch in a Birdcage

A/N: _whew! long chapter! lol but there's a few fight scenes in this chap so i'm happy with it. but another sad ending.. well i don't wanna spoil everything for you. enjoy!_

disclaimer: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me_.

* * *

><p>Chapter 19: Torch in a Birdcage_

He looked at me in surprise before his eyes softened. "Kawa, you should stay behind, to look after Hijikata-sanâ€|" He began to explain.

"I said I'm going with you and I mean it." I snapped, quieting him.

Hajime frowned at my tone; I lowered my gaze, looking at the _katana_ with red fabric before looking at him.

>"Iâ€| Souji, he died protecting us. I want to honor him by fighting to protect the Shinsengumi." I stated quietly.<p>

A soft exhale escaped my brother; he shook his head. "You might as well take her with you, Saitou. Kawa means to go through with this." He reasoned.

Hajime scowled slightly in defeat and sighed. "Get ready to leave, then." He ordered, perking my ears.

I nodded, smiling softly. "_Hai_," I replied, watching him straighten and leave the room.

>Toshi looked at me. "You'd better not die out there." He warned.<p>

I smiled again and huffed. "'Course I won't; Souji had me swear to protect you, so I don't intend to die anytime soon, nii-san." I replied, meeting his violet eyes.

He smiled slightly at the mention of Souji, nodding. "Just be careful." He urged.

I looked at him and smiled softly, nodding. "Will do." I looked at the girl. "Chizu-chan, you're gonna take care of Toshi for me while I'm with Hajime. Think you can handle it?" I wondered.

Chizuru blinked before nodding. "Y-yeah, I'll handle it!" She said lightly, her brown eyes softening. "Please be careful out there," she urged.

I chuckled and straightened to my feet, hoisting Souji's _katana_ and placing it at my right hip. "I will. See you two soon," I said, waving lightly before I hurried out after Hajime.

I knew I should've left his _katana_ ontop of the hill, that day.

But a part of me wanted to keep it, to remember him by.

Of course I cleaned the blade the next day after keeping the _katana_, wiping the blood off the blade before it rusted; there had been a stray sheath I picked up from one of the ronin and I used it to sheath Souji's _katana_.

>I looked up at the sun and smiled softly.<p>

Even though he would be scolding me for going to the frontline, I knew Souji would be proud of me.

* * *

><p>"Under Lord Katamori's orders, we are to work alongside the Shinsengumi." The main man of the squad declared from bowing low before Hajime.<p>

I crossed my arms absently, glancing up at him as I stood to his right.

Even though it was an honor to have Katamori assign a squad of his to work with us, it kind of left me on my toes; the Aizu were old fashioned idiots that sat on their asses four years ago at the Ikedaya incident and tried to take the credit from the Shinsengumi on raiding the inn.

I didn't entirely trust them as far as I could throw them, to be honest.

>But if Hajime was willing to trust themâ€¦ I didn't have much choice.<p>

"It's a pleasure to meet you." Hajime spoke, perking my ears.

The men looked up in surprise at seeing him standing before them instead of my brother; or maybe it was because he was wearing western clothing, and kept his _katana_ on his right hip instead of his left.

:::::::::BO:::::::::

The men filed into line like dominoes.

I smiled slightly, leaning against the doorway. "Talk about strict. Nii-san has never been that way," I mused aloud.

"It would seem they're quick to obey his orders." Hajime mused next to me, referring to their captain, Masaki.

>"They won't follow orders from outsiders such as us. Isn't that what you're saying?" Shimada-san chimed.<p>

That explains things, I thought, watching Hajime walk forward into the training room; I followed at his heels, Shimada-san behind me.

"It would seem you are already displeased with me." He said to the men gathered before us; he glanced at Masaki. "Well, Masaki-kun?" He wondered.

"I would appreciate it if you didn't refer to me as 'Masaki-kun'." He scowled at him. "Saitou-_dono_, a warrior doesn't use the honorific 'kun'." He chided.

Hajime looked calm (as he usually did, which didn't surprise me). "Anything else?"

Masaki looked surprised before he scowled again. "Then let me be frank. It's your garb! A warrior should wear armor in battle, not that flimsy clothing." He stated.

I smirked wryly at his complaint; to be honest, Hajime looked more handsome in Western clothing. Black suited him best.

"Also, why're you wearing your swords on the right? Everyone is supposed to wear them on the left!" He demanded, eyeing the _katana_ fastened at his right hip. "What do you think your swords are, other than the embodiment of your warrior soul?" He asked.

Warrior soulâ€|? I wondered.

"We shall work with you as were Lord Katamori's orders, but noone in Aizu will obey orders from a captain who lost his warrior soul." Masaki stated.

"He hasn't lost anything!" I spat, jerking his attention away from Hajime to me; I stood my full height, glaring defiantly into his brown eyes.

Masaki didn't look to be much older than me.

His brow furrowed. "And ontop of everything else that is wrong with you, Saitou-dono, you have the audacity to bring a woman into the Aizu domain. Women are forbidden from wielding swords, much less dressing like men and speaking as brashly as this one hasâ€|" He began to complain again before the point of a _katana_ appeared between his eyes; his eyes widened.

I glowered at him. "If you insult Hajime for ****one**** ****more**** wrong thing that you can _miraculously_ see past your raised nose, I'm gonna make you regret every damn _syllable_. Saitou Hajime may not dress like you, he may not ****complain**** like a ****whining child****, but you can damn well know that his warrior soul is strong! And if you

dare insult any other member of the Shinsengumi including myself, ****you're**** going to be missing a limb. Am I clear, ****_Masaki_**?**" I spat coldly, locking stare with his brown eyes as my fingers tightened their grip on my _katana_.

Masaki quieted before he shoved the point of the blade out of his face, glaring at me.
>"Just who in hell are you to threaten a man like _myself_?" He demanded as he drew his _katana_ reflexively.

My foot knocked his legs from beneath him faster than I would've thought possible, making him fall on his back, _katana_ flying from his hand.

I glowered down at him as he tried to get up, his brown eyes widening at seeing the _katana_ poised at his adam's apple. "The She-Wolf of Mibu, ****Hijikata Yasakawa****." I answered stonily.

Masaki quieted again, defeat shining reluctantly in his eyes; I drew my blade back, sheathing it and extending a hand of aid to him.

His eyes widened again before he shooed my hand away, straightening on his own and picking up his discarded weapon, sheathing it.
>I turned to the rest of the Aizu men. "Does anyone else have a problem with the Shinsengumi?" I wondered, meeting their eyes that looked surprised at seeing their captain be knocked down by a woman.

They fell silent, keeping their mouths shut.
>I nodded slightly, looking at Hajime as I crossed my arms at my chest.<p>

* * *

><p>He gripped his shoulder. "Go on ahead," he declared.<p>

I looked at him and nodded slightly, looking at Hajime. "Hajime," I began.
>"Stay at my back." He instructed, perking my ears before he took off.<p>

"_Hai_," I replied, sprinting after his lead, dodging the bullets that flew past us like arrows as we both jumped over the small fence that protected the enemy.

He cut through the gunmen effortlessly as the rest of the soldiers broke down the fence and stormed in.

I rammed my foot into the jaw of a soldier that flew forward with his _katana_ in hand, knocking him away; blood flew as I cut through his throat, staining my blade.

Two soldiers flew at Hajime's blind side; "Hajime!" I crashed into one of them, scuffling with him until I scrambled away.

His _katana_ lunged at my face; I blocked his attack, glaring into his eyes before disengaging the blades, my _katana_ stabbing into his heart.
>The man sputtered with wide eyes as blood dripped from the injury; I glared emotionlessly at him, stabbing through his back before yanking

the blade out, turning away as he fell.<p>

A bullet whizzed past my ear; I sprinted for the gunman, dodging another bullet that flew past me before my _katana_ sliced his throat open.

>Blood flew before he fell back.<p>

A loud battle cry sounded from the east, perking my ears. "Shit," I grumbled, retreating back to Hajime's side.

A burly soldier flew at me; I dodged his attack, stabbing into his heart before yanking the blade out and hurrying to my captain's side.

>"Hajime, we've got company. We need to fall back, otherwise we're done for." I declared as I backed into his side, katana in hand.

"Retreat, retreat!" Hajime called to the men.

"Don't retreat; we must ****not**** ****retreat****!" Masaki's voice shouted over him.

"Masaki, you ****idiot****__!_" I barked, widening my eyes when he cut down another Satcho soldier, one of his men racing to his aid before another enemy soldier attacked him.

Hajime flew past me, stabbing the enemy soldier in the back before yanking his _katana_ free. "Why aren't you following orders? We're retreating!" He snapped.

"Have the enemy's numbers scared you?" Masaki demanded as he straightened. "We can't save our lives at the cost of losing Shirakawa-guchi!" He argued.

"You can always throw your life away!" Hajime quieted him sharply. "But you'll die in vain if you mistake when to do so!" He stated.

"****What****__?!_" Masaki spat.

A soldier flew at Hajime; my _katana_ stabbed into his heart before I yanked the blade out.

>"If you want to die that soon, Masaki, I don't mind putting a blade in your throat. Get your ass in gear and fall back. ****Now****!" I declared annoyedly, glaring at his brown eyes before nodding to Hajime.

"Kawa's right. Retreat, your men will obey orders if they're coming from you." Hajime agreed, scowling slightly at the distraught Masaki.

"Retreat, now!" Masaki ordered after a few moments of mentally debating, scowling at his men.

"Let's move," Hajime declared, his hand grabbing mine before we followed the Aizu men.

So much for Shirakawa-guchi!|

:~::~Lp::~:

"Y'know, the people in Aizu are simply the most hard-headed bunch." Otori mused.

"Don't forget old-fashioned." I chimed quietly, folding my arms at my chest as I sat on Hajime's right.

He laughed sheepishly. "Yes, that as well. When I said I needed an emergency audience with Lord Katamori, the clan guards at the castle blew me off! They said they couldn't let anyone through without prior permission, even for the governor-general." He declared.

I sweatdropped as Shimada-san smiled sheepishly. "The Aizu clan is famous for their strict ways." He offered.

"Tell me about it; I literally had to knock sense into that Masaki idiot to prove that women were just as capable of wielding a sword as men!" I declared.

Hajime smiled slightly at the memory. "Of course you are; it was actually amusing to see the infamous She-Wolf of Mibu stump an Aizu clan captain." He mused, perking my ears; his blue eyes met my gray and a sort of pride shined in his gaze.

My cheeks warmed and I ribbed him. "Shut up, Baka-_dono_." I grumbled, looking away.

He chuckled softly, seeming pleased at shutting me up.

Otori balked. "Yasakawa-kun, I had no idea you were referred to as 'She-Wolf of Mibu'. It's a wonder Hijikata-kun never mentioned it." He said lightly.

I blinked before feeling my cheeks warm; I laughed and rubbed behind my neck. "Nah, nii-san never likes to admit his half-sister is capable of kicking ass." I shrugged.

Hajime's hand found mine under the table and squeezed gently as he cleared his throat. "Their stringent ways are proof that they're trustworthy." He declared, referring to Aizu.

I looked at him and smiled softly, squeezing his fingers. _Why is it he acts jealous now that Souji's gone?_ I wondered.

I had no interest in Otori; at least, not in _that_ way.

* * *

><p>"Aizu, if I had to guess. After all, the Choshuu bastards despise Aizu." Toshi's voice spoke, perking my ears as Shimada-san, Heisuke, Sannan-san, Hajime and me looked up to see him enter the meeting room.<p>

"Nii-san," I smiled in relief before straightening to welcome him back.

THWACK.

He recoiled, rubbing his head gingerly. "Owâ€| What the hell was that for?!" He demanded, looking at me with one open violet

eye.

"**_That's_** for scaring the hell out of me at Utsunomiya! I'd been waiting until you fully recuperated so I could brain you for being so damn reckless." I snapped, glaring patiently at him with my hand on my hip.

Toshi grimaced and scowled at me, letting the bump throb on his head as he sighed. "Damn it all, Yasakawa, you never change," he grumbled.

I smiled proudly and dusted my hands off. "I missed you too, nii-san," I said lightly, retreating to sit back down next to Hajime.

Heisuke snickered. "I never thought I'd see the day where Kawa-chan ever brained Hijikata-san!" He mused to Shimada-san.

THWACK.

"And if you ever bring it up again, you're **dead**." Toshi growled as he cracked his knuckles.

Heisuke winced and rubbed the swelling bump on his head gingerly. "R-right, Hijikata-san!" He whimpered. "Chizuru," he began lightly when the girl appeared behind my brother.

She smiled lightly at him. "Heisuke-kun," she replied, looking at me. "Kawa-chan!" She smiled.
>I smiled back. "In the flesh," I said with a shrug.<p>

"Apparently your injuries have healed, considering Kawa's beating." Hajime mused.
>I blushed slightly and huffed, folding my arms at my chest.<p>

He nodded, glancing at me before smiling. "Yeah, sorry to have worried you." He declared.

"And here I got to take it easy while you were gone!" Heisuke lamented as he folded his arms behind his head, smirking sheepishly at my brother.

"Don't mean you didn't have enough work to do?" Toshi wondered.

"At any rate, this is a sign of relief. You're our pillar of support, so morale will increase with you back." Sannan-san said calmly, smiling at my brother.

"Saitou, sorry about making you stand in for me." Toshi apologized, perking my ears.
>Hajime smiled slightly. "It was nothing." He shrugged.<p>

I smiled softly at him, glancing at my brother, at Sannan-san, at Heisuke, at Shimada-san and Chizuru.

Souji, I wish you were here. You, Kondou-san, Shinpatsu, Sano, Yamazaki and Inoue-san would be proud of how far we've come.

I wish we could live together, like old times.

>Like the old Shinsengumi.<p>

That'd be great, wouldn't it, Souji?

* * *

><p>"I think our only option is to retreat to Sendai, request reinforcements, and bide our time to attempt a comeback." Otori declared.<p>

"'Bide our time'?" I repeated.

"You mean to abandon the Aizu clan?" Toshi demanded, perking my ears; he slammed his palms onto the tabletop. "Did Lord Katamori approve of this?!"

Otori looked grave. "It was Lord Katamori's idea." He declared.
>I widened my eyes slightly.<p>

"But Lord Katamori intends to remain with the Aizu clan and fight until the last man falls." He explained.

"Then we should acknowledge his warrior spirit and help him fight!" Toshi barked.

"Nii-san," I began.

"Lord Katamori has a warrior's pride; he has resolved to share the fate of his Aizu clan. We should bide our time instead of throwing his warrior's pride and spirit to waste!" Otori silenced him.

"Otori-kun, that's suicide! Katamori will need help to aid the Aizu against those Satcho dogs and you know it..." I exclaimed, scowling at him.

"I'm ordering this as Governor General!" Otori barked, quieting me.

>I widened my eyes slightly again before looking down, huffing.
"Fine." I grumbled.<p>

"We're retreating to Sendai. Begin preparations to retreat immediately." He ordered my brother.

>Nii-san, I thought, looking at him to see he was reluctantly obeying his orders, watching Otori leave the tent.

"This is horrible; it's a repeat of what happened to Kondou-san," Toshi growled, perking my ears.

"Toshi," I began, lowering my gaze at the memory; my left hand reached to rub my right arm where my scar was gingerly.

>The tent was silent for a while.<p>

"I'll stay behind." A voice said to my left; my eyes widened.

I looked at him alertly.

>"Saitou?" Toshi wondered.<p>

"As Otori-san said, it might be a matter of time before the Aizu clan falls. But the Aizu clan has protected us up until now. As a warrior,

I want to put my heart into helping this clan since they're fighting like warriors until the end." He looked at my brother. "Hijikata-san, please go to Sendai." He requested.

I felt like my world was crashing around me again.

But this time, it felt worse than it had with Souji.
>My hands balled into fists.<p>

I stood to my feet, exiting the meeting and storming out past Heisuke who came into the tent.

"Is it true we're retreating to Sendai? And where's Kawa going?" He asked.

I kept walking, my fists at my sides shaking in anger and betrayal and pain that I felt towards everything that happened.

Why the hell did he want to die here? We didn't owe Aizu _shit_, just because they supported the Shinsengumi didn't mean we needed to be their vassals!

.....xD.....

It was kind of cool out here.

I rubbed my arms gingerly, scowling out at the darkness beyond the camp.

>I looked down at the pendant around my neck, lifting the charm between my fingers to look at the jade stone.<p>

Souji, why does Hajime want to die like this?

"I was wondering where you were." His voice said behind me.

I smiled bitterly, releasing the charm and crossing my arms at my chest. "I didn't abandon you lot, so there's no need to raise the alarm." I mused, hearing his footsteps stop at my right as he came to a halt.

"Can I ask you to do something for me?" He wondered, perking my ears.

I nodded, keeping my gaze away from him; knowing Hajime, he'd be able to see right through me. Sometimes it made me feel transparent, whenever he or Souji mentioned it in the past.

>"Shoot." I mumbled.<p>

"Live." He said, surprising me; I glanced at him to see his blue eyes were sad, and yet determination shined in his gaze like a flame.

"What for? Souji's gone, everyone else in the old group is basically gone too. You're leaving. Why should I?" I demanded sharply, glaring out at the darkness.

Hajime exhaled slowly. "Because I'm asking you to." He replied quietly.

I felt the familiar sting of tears well in my eyes; I ran a hand

through my hair. "Iâ€¦ I don't want to live, not without you." I whispered, keeping my eyes away from his.

If we locked gaze, I knew the tears would fall.

"Kawa, you have to." Hajime insisted.

"**Why**?! You're marching to your death and I know you're going to make me stay behind, because you don't want me to die too! Hajime, **I want to die with you**!" I shouted, turning to glare up at him.

He quieted, lowering his gaze. "I want you to live, Kawa. I don't want to see you suffer any more; I know Souji's death ripped your heart into pieces, and I cursed him for hurting you. I cursed him for leaving you behind." He ignored the wince that made my cheek twitch, keeping his eyes lowered. "Yasakawa, please _live_." He pleaded softly, perking my ears.

I saw the tears blur my vision before feeling them fall slowly down my cheeks; he pulled me forward to land in his arms.
>Hajime held me tightly, letting me cry; I remembered that night when Souji was shot, when Hajime had first said 'I love you', digging my nails into his back and closing my eyes tightly.<p>

"Would you have run away, if I asked you?" I wondered softly after a while.

He quieted and rubbed my back, seeming to smile. "If it meant going anywhere with you, most likely." He said in the same tone.

I rested my cheek on his shoulder. "Don't let your stupid pride make you lose your life, Saitou Hajime. Please." I requested.

Hajime nodded, cradling my head in his hand.
>"I finally fall for a woman who's ten times as stubborn and fierce as any man and she's ordering me around." He mused, trying at a joke.<p>

I laughed weakly, sniffing. "Because next to my brother and Souji, I care about you." I replied quietly.

He seemed to smile again as his arms tightened on my back.
>"I care about you too, that's why I want you to live when I probably won't." I shuddered at the thought; he kissed my temple softly, running his hand through my hair. "I love you, Kawa. Ever since you smiled at me four years ago." He relented softly.<p>

I nodded and held onto him. "I love you too, Hajime." I said.

Hajime kissed me slowly, lovingly; I blushed slightly, smiling and kissing back warmly, hugging his neck.

I do love you Hajime. With all my heart.

Please don't die for some lord.

Please come back to me.

* * *

><p>AN: _i was almost choking up at this one too. lol but the rest of this fic is winding down, so stay tuned to the next few chapters, yeah? _
>also, you lot know the drill. thanks~

20. Prologue 04: Blood, Tears, Regret

A/N: _yo, how's everyone doing? sorry for such a long-awaited update! i've been busy with writing another fic i'm going to publish here in a bit._
>anyway, on to the story!

Hajime and Souji are now gone. the numbers have dwindled... will Kawa still have the resolve to fight for the Shinsengumi? enjoy!

****disclaimer****: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 20: Prologue 04 - Blood, Tears, Regret**

The sound of blades clashing rang in the air as I sprinted as fast as I could back to the place we were staying at.

Katana drawn, I leaped over the fence and stabbed the heart of the nearest Fury, yanking the blade free and ramming a foot into the next, slicing the head off with my _wakizashi_.

"Kawa!" I heard Heisuke bark from being hidden by at least three more Fury.

I stabbed the heart of one of the Fury, watching him behead another as I beheaded a second one, panting slightly as the head rolled. "I thought I smelled blood," I mused, glaring at the dead Fury around us.

"Where's Hijikata-san?" Heisuke asked, looking up at me with smudges of blood on his young face.

I nodded in the direction I'd come from. "He's on his way. Where's Chizuru?" I replied, meeting his teal eyes.

He looked in the same direction I'd come from. "Kodou-san, he took her with him to Sendai Castle." He informed, seeming like he was angered with himself for letting her be taken.

I widened my eyes slightly. "Sendai Castle?" I repeated.

"Yasakawa!" I looked about to see Toshi had appeared at last, looking from the dead Fury to me and Heisuke.

::::::::::::xD::::::::::::

He laughed wryly. "It took a while to fight all those guys." He declared to the girl.

>"Yeah, you're lucky I saved your ass toward the end." I chimed calmly as I stood next to him.<p>

"Kawa-chan!" She said in relief; I smiled at her, perking up at seeing both Sannan-san and Kodou-san in the room, my hand lowering to the hilt of my _katana_.

Did Sannan-san really betray us? I wondered.

"This castle is strange; there's hardly any castle guard and noone else is here." Toshi mused as he stepped into the doorway, standing at my right.

"Hijikata-san!" Chizuru beamed.

Kodou-san grimaced at his comment; "I thought you would be arriving at any minute, now." Sannan-san declared.

I glared at him, perking up as Toshi walked past me to point his _katana_ at his head.

>"Explain yourself, Sannan-san: did you commit those murders outside the castle?" Toshi demanded.<p>

Nii-san, I mused, glaring from him to Kodou-san as my fingers tightened on the hilt.

"No; I may have killed some rampant Fury, but I never murdered indiscriminately." Sannan-san replied calmly, looking away from the threat standing near him.

"Then why didn't you contact us; and why're you so chummy with Kodou-san?" I asked sharply.

"You'll never find what you want in Sendai; the Northern Alliance plans to avoid the war." He answered, speaking to my brother. "The way Aizu was thrashed must've scared them." He added.

_Hajime_â€|

>I growled and clenched my teeth, drawing my katana as I glared at him.

"Apparently I've said too much." Sannan-san mused as he must've heard my growl of anger.

"Speak ill of him _again_ and it won't be my brother's blade cutting your head off, Sannan-san." I spat coldly.

He smirked a little. "While I was spying on the enemy, I learned that Kodou-san was displeased with the New Government Army." He mused.

>"I came here under top-secret orders from the New Government Army, but I'm sick of watching humans fight." Kodou-san chimed.
"So I joined forces with him in his goal to create a kingdom of _oni_ that we Furies can live in. I then infiltrated this castle and took over Sendai." Sannan-san finished.

"**What**?" Toshi asked in surprise as both Chizuru and Heisuke balked.

"_Bastard!_" I spat.

I'd always held a small amount of respect towards Sannan-san, even went out on a limb during the time where we took in Itou-san, and when he became a Fury because of his shame! Why was he turning his back on the Shinsengumi now? On everything Kondou-san, Toshi and the others fought for?!

"No wonder the castle didn't seem right." Toshi growled.

The rushing of footsteps sounded around us as the doors near Sannan-san opened and a horde of _katana_-wielding Furies rushed into the room.

_Shit! _I drew Souji's _katana_, glowering at the large amount of Fury.

"Every Fury in the country is currently in this castle. They're the ultimate weapon for toppling the New Government Army." Sannan-san stated.

"Come and help us, Chizuru. We need you as leader: let's use these Fury to rebuild the Yukimura Clan." Kodou-san turned to the girl.

>"Father, if you refuse to let that go, then I can't." Chizuru declared; his face contorted in a grimace.<p>

"What about you, Hijikata-kun: would you care to lead these Furies as we fight to overthrow the New Government Army?" Sannan-san drawled, looking at my brother.

"Toshi," I began alertly.

"We don't need the Fury Corps to fight! Besides, I have a duty to uphold." Toshi snapped, extending his right arm to protect me.

I widened my eyes slightly, looking at him in surprise. _Nii-san_, I thought, remembering the battle of Toba-Fushimi.

We're still blood, and I would rather die than let anything happen to you.'

Toshi!

"Then you've left me with no choice." Sannan-san mused darkly, drawing his sword from the sheath; Toshi raised his _katana_, sinking into a fighting stance. "If you say there isn't a battlefield for us Fury, who can do nothing but fight!" He lashed out at the Fury to his right, blood flying as the soldier fell; I widened my eyes alertly, watching a second Fury be cut down shortly after lunging at him. "Putting them out of their misery is the least that I can do!" Sannan-san exclaimed.

"Heisuke," Toshi beckoned.

"I know!" Heisuke nodded as he and Toshi stood next to Sannan-san.

Kodou-san balked. "Why, Sannan-kun?!" He asked in horror.

"I must apologize, but the Commander of the Shinsengumi's orders are

absolute." He replied, pushing his glasses up his nose gingerly.

"Were you planning this from the start?" Toshi asked, sounding like he smirked.

>"In order to deceive your enemy, you must first deceive your allies." Sannan-san smirked back.<p>

"That was too cool, Sannan-san," Heisuke said with a grin.

The Furies tensed in their ranks.

"Fools! How do you plan to fight when the Shinsengumi has lost most of its forces?" Kodou-san balked.

Sannan-san struck first, cutting down one; a _katana_ flew past his head at the second one, making a direct hit with the Fury's skull.

I huffed, smirking slightly. "Geez that almost hit your head, Sannan-san!" I said lightly, dodging as a Fury flew at me, stabbing it with Souji's _katana_.

Toshi and Heisuke had already changed to their Fury forms, cutting down as many of the Fury as they could get.

I ducked out of the way as two Furies flew at me from both my left and right sides, scrambling to yank the _katana_ from the dead Fury's skull and stabbing both Fury in the heart before pulling the blades out swiftly as they fell, blood flying in the air.

Three more flew at me from the back; I kicked the jaw of the first one in, hopping into the air and doing a small somersault before severing the heads of the other two, the heads dropping as I landed on my feet rather clumsily.

The first one lunged at me; I caught the blade, shoving it back before stabbing it in the heart with both my _katana_ and Souji's.

I panted slightly, glaring at the dead Fury around me, looking up to see Toshi, Heisuke and Sannan-san had finished decimating the remainder of the horde; I flicked my wrist before sheathing Souji's _katana_, looking at the dagger pendant absently.

Souji, would you be proud that I've stayed alive this long? I wondered.

"The Shinsengumi just suffered a great loss. Do you think you stand a chance in the upcoming battles?" Sannan-san asked my brother, perking my ears.

I walked towards the girl, crouching next to her and rubbing her shoulder. "Chizuru," I said softly as she wept for her father.

>"Noone fighting thinks we'll lose." Toshi replied calmly.<p>

"After all, you ****do**** hate to lose." Heisuke chimed with a smirk.

I looked over at them and smiled slightly.

"We were useless in this new era. We never should've created the

Furies." Sannan-san mused.

Toshi shifted to his normal form, sheathing his katana before Heisuke dropped to the floor, Sannan-san dropping as well.

"What's happening?" I asked worriedly as I abandoned the girl's side to go to their side, Toshi already kneeling next to them.

"It seems we've reached our limit," Sannan-san mused.

>"Our lives are over," Heisuke chimed.<p>

I widened my eyes slightly, looking at him. "You're not serious!" I began as Chizuru came forward to kneel at Toshi's right.

"Did you know about this?" Toshi asked them as he took their hands in his.

"Yeah," Heisuke replied.

"The two of us may not have always seen eye-to-eye, but I always acknowledged your ability. I'm proud of how I got to fight alongside you in the Shinsengumi." Sannan-san admitted with a weak smile.

"Sannan-san, no," I declared, remembering the day I'd found Souji's katana left behind after he'd fought for us, after he'd fought to protect me; the familiar sting of tears started to well in my eyes.

"Look after Hijikata-kun," Sannan-san asked the girl. "And you as well, Yasakawa-kun. I apologize for what I said regarding Saitou-kun, before." He declared.

>I shook my head, smiling weakly. "It's not your fault; you didn't mean it, Sannan-san." I replied.<p>

"Kawa-chan, I know Souji would be proud, that you've lived this long for him" and Hijikata-san." Heisuke said weakly.

The tears were hot as they began to fall, my heart lurching when he said Souji's name. "He's proud of you two as well, Heisuke. I know he is." I said hoarsely, smiling a little.

I watched as they both faded to a pale gray color before becoming dust covered in blue flames.

Souji's smiling face reappeared in my mind.

So that's how he died, that day

>I let the tears fall down my face as I closed my eyes tightly and clenched my teeth.<p>

Thank you, Souji.

* * *

><p>My eyes widened in surprise. "You're
what__?!_" I balked.

"You heard me. I've kept you away from enjoying life for five years. I can't let you waste your life away by jumping headfirst into a

battle that was never yours to begin with." Toshi replied.

I scowled at the clear day outside, looking at him. "I'm going to go with you! I made a promise to stay by your side, and I intend to keep it!" I exclaimed, meeting his violet eyes.

His gaze tightened. "Our father's will doesn't say you were indebted to risking your life for my sake!" He began to argue.

I lifted the sheathed _katana_ Souji had owned, showing it to his eyes.

"Souji made me promise to look after you. That was his last wish before he!" I looked to see my hand shaking on the sheath; I lowered it to my side, glaring up at him. "I know you want to protect me, I know. But Toshi, please! Please let me go with you! I'll stay out of your way, I'll help you with tactics, I don't care. Just please let me honor Souji's last wish!" I declared, closing my eyes tightly as his smiling face flashed in my mind again.<p>

His hand on my head stirred me, a soft exhale escaping him.

"He'd probably come back to haunt me if I forced you to stay behind. I will allow you to come along, but on one condition." His violet eyes softened a little when he met my gaze. "Don't get into something you can't break out of." He requested.<p>

I nodded. "_Hai!_" I replied, smiling up at him.

Toshi sighed quietly. "We leave soon, so get ready." He added, leaving me to exit the room.

"Right," I mused, smiling again before he left.<p>

I looked down at Souji's _katana_ in my hands and smiled, imagining his green eyes smiling at me.

* * *

><p>AN: _sorry there wasn't a lot of other paragraphs in this chap, i was working on something else. anyway, more to come so look forward to it!_

>you lot know the drill, yeah? thanks~

21. To See the Blood Moon

A/N: _sorry for the wait! geez, i'm getting bad about updating late.. anyway, here's chapter twenty-one. there's one last chapter after this, so i figured i'd give you guys a heads up on that. other than that, enjoy the chap!_

****disclaimer**:** _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 21: To See the Blood Moon

The familiar 'shink' of my _katana_ being sheathed was the only audible sound against the wind that howled softly around us.

"We were like them up until recently. We tried fight against the Satcho with our spirit. The sight must've looked hilarious to them.

But I realized it was too late, after the tables had turned." My brother mused as we looked at the captured enemy soldiers.

I looked up at the snow falling softly to the cold ground; I thought of Souji, and Hajime, and the others that had already gone so we could get this far.

>The wind caught at my hair gently.<p>

"If you're going to keep standing there, you'll freeze in place by morning." His voice spoke, stirring me from my thoughts.

I blinked before looking up to meet his violet gaze, seeing it was softened as he stared at me; I smirked slightly and rubbed behind my neck. "Sorry, just thinking." I replied with a shrug.

Toshi shook his head and sighed, ruffling my hair habitually. "Maybe it's been too long that you've stuck around me for five years." He muttered.

I huffed and crossed my arms at my chest. "Shut up," I grumbled as I looked away.

* * *

><p>I almost had a head-on collision with Otori.<p>

We both yelped an apology before he looked to see it was me he'd almost ran into; he smiled weakly and rubbed the back of his neck. "S-sorry, Yasakawa-kun! I didn't mean to run into you like that," he stammered.

I sweatdropped and laughed sheepishly. "It's alright, I wasn't lookin' where I was going. How'd the meeting go?" I asked, meeting his hazel eyes.

>Otori glanced down the hall where the meeting room was. "Not bad, but I was mostly worried for Hijikata-kun." He replied, perking my ears.<p>

"Has something happened to my brother?" I asked, looking at him sharply.

He shook his head, looking back at the way he'd come from. "No, not that I know of. He sounded rather ill, though, when I went to check on him a minute ago." He replied, frowning.

I frowned as well before bowing my head slightly. "Sorry for the collision; I'll catch you later, Otori-kun," I said, smiling at him before I trotted to his room.

I knocked on the door. "Toshi? Are you alright?" I asked.

He sounded like he was shuffling for something on the other end. "K-Kawa, don't come in here!" He groaned, sounding like he was growling a little in the back of his throat.

My hand gripped the handle of my katana at my hip before I slid the door open enough to slip into the dark room.

"Toshi," I began, looking at him to see he was sitting down on the couch with his head against the backrest.

>He looked up at me with tired violet eyes. "I told you to not come in," he said, his tone sharp despite the weariness that showed in his face.<p>

I shook my head, walking towards him. "You know I half-way listen to you sometimes, nii-san," I replied quietly, smiling for him before I sat down at his right.

My eyes glanced from the beads of sweat on his cheek to his slightly disheveled black hair. "Did you have another attack, again?" I wondered, settling my gaze on his eyes.

Toshi nodded and lifted a hand to rub his eyes gingerly. "It wasn't major, but it was hell regardless." He looked at me through one eye. "How did you figure I was in here, in the first place?" He asked.

>I jerked a thumb over my shoulder at the door. "Otori-kun mentioned you weren't feeling well." I explained.<p>

He followed the direction I pointed at and he huffed, smiling wryly. "That kid is almost as perceptive as you," he muttered.

I chuckled and brushed strands of hair from my face back. "Doubt it, he hasn't spent five years living with an _oni_ like I have," I quipped quietly.

Toshi smirked a little, his violet eyes lowering to the pendant around my neck before his gaze softened. "He give you that?" He asked, perking my ears.

I lifted the jade dagger charm between my thumb and index finger and smiled thoughtfully, nodding. "It was the last thing, before he left." I said in a soft tone.

He lowered his gaze and smirked again. "It suits you." He mused.

I blinked before smiling again. "So I've heard," I muttered, looking out at the window at the dark night outside. "Nii-san, d'you think Chizuru is doing alright?" I wondered, looking at him.

Toshi looked away this time, keeping his violet eyes away from my curious gaze. "Knowing her, she's doing just fine. Her life is better off without seeing more bloodshed than she's already seen living with us." He mused.

I smiled softly, rolling my eyes at his aloof response. "I miss her too." I replied, perking his ears.

He coughed and scowled at a spot on the far wall, his cheeks turning rosy pink. "Iâ€¦ Don't delude yourself into thinking such a damn thing." He growled stiffly.

I laughed quietly, smiling again. "Whatever you say, _oni_." I leaned forward to kiss his cheek lightly before slipping off the couch, straightening to my feet.

>"Hopefully there's some tea around here." I muttered, walking away to slide the door open before exiting out into the hall.<p>

* * *

><p>A pair of familiar brown eyes smiled at me as I was headed down the hall to my brother's office.
"It's been awhile, hasn't it, Kawa-chan?" The brunette girl said in that calm and meek voice I hadn't heard for a while.

I balked before smiling warmly. "It has, yes," I replied, pulling her forward into a brief yet tight hug.

She laughed meekly at the embrace before hugging back, pulling away to meet my gaze. "What're you doing here?" I asked, taking in her Western garb that almost matched mine, except for the reds and browns in the color scheme.

"Otori-san requested that I come to help you guys," she replied with a shrug.

I beamed and then chuckled; _Bless him_, I thought. "Toshi's gonna be excited that you're here." I said with a smile.

Yukimura Chizuru chuckled with me, walking at my side to his office. "I can imagine. How is he?" She asked.

I shrugged, smiling a little. "The same as usual. Stubborn, tough-skinned, hot-headedâ€¦ You know how he is." I replied.
>She chuckled again. "Doesn't sound like he's changed a lot." She mused, perking up as we stopped short of his door.<p>

I stood back, letting her go first.

Chizuru smiled again and knocked on the door.
>"I'm busy, come back laterâ€¦!" He called, his voice muffled by the door.<p>

"I'm coming in!" She declared, entering the room and closing the door behind her.

I smiled after her, looking out at the slushy ground outside; my fingers lowered to the dagger charm of my pendant.

Souji, I miss you. Probably more than I'd ever openly admit. I hope you and Hajime are happy up there.

It was quiet on the other side of the door.
>A soft exhale escaped me before I moved forward, running a hand through my hair.<p>

I slid the door open as quietly as I could, seeing both Toshi and Chizuru in a long-overdue embrace; a grin stretched across my face and I did what Souji would've done if he were here with me.

"**Well it's about damn time**!" I crowed as I threw the door open wide, the wood making a loud 'clack' sound when it was shoved open.

Chizuru yelped as they scrambled away from each other, backing away into the wall as Toshi drew back to his desk.

Laughter shook me as I cracked up, grinning at the sight of their balking faces that were colored a deep shade of reddish pink.

"**Damn it, Yasakawa, don't do that**!" Toshi snarled annoyedly, being the first to snap out of the surprised vibe they shared as his violet eyes narrowed and he glowered at me, daggers in his gaze.

I giggled, grinning still at him. "You know y'shoulda seen that coming, Toshi. Besides, you two were too damn quiet in here, I was wonderin' if you'd gone and done the unmentionable," I teased lightly.

His cheeks burned as red as Chizuru's hair-tie and he spluttered a huff, glaring at me with renewed embarrassment (I saw Chizuru also blush the same shade of red out of the corner of my eye). "N-no, we didn't do that! Good grief, I hate it when you jump to conclusions." He growled, his cheeks still burning.

I smiled innocently and folded my arms behind my head. "Don't bite my head off just yet, nii-san. I know y'wouldn't do that to poor Chizu-chan; y'respect women too much to be that sleazy." I waved him off calmly.

Toshi quieted reluctantly and huffed. "Thanks for having _some_ sort of faith in my self-control," he grumbled.

I waved absently as I turned to exit the room. "Don't mention it; now off to get some tea!" I said lightly, opening the door and slipping out into the hall; I glanced over my shoulder at them. "If y'do pull somethin', leave a note on the door, 'kay?" I wondered with a wink before closing the door and trotting down the hall.

In the back of my mind, I knew Souji would've laughed his ass off at seeing the balking faces of both Toshi and Chizuru.

:::::::::oOo:::::::::

"She's such an adorable and cute attendant; I bet there's no room for complaints!" Otori laughed gently.

I laughed quietly and smirked at him. "Now, now, don't go coveting my brother's charge, Otori-kun. Besides, you're a bit old to be scamming on the poor girl," I teased gently.

He blushed a little and chuckled, rubbing his neck. "Suppose you're right! I will admit that I'm envious of him for having both a cute attendant as well as a beautiful sister," he remarked.

I blushed slightly before smiling. "Nice try, but I like being alone." I waved him off.

Otori made a face similar to a pout, making me giggle. "Very well, then." He said dejectedly.

>"I guess you're right; I don't need any other attendants so long as she's with me. Though my sister is available," Toshi commented, perking my ears.<p>

I balked. "Toshi, I'm hurt!" I exclaimed dramatically.

Chizuru giggled quietly at my tone.

>"I'm surprised you said that, Hijikata-kun! I'd love a wife like

her." Otori remarked, referring to Chizuru.<p>

"Sorry, but you'll have to look elsewhere. She's mine: I can't let you have her." Toshi declined coolly.

I blinked before grinning gently at seeing her blush humbly, folding my arms behind my head as I leaned back into the couch.

Otori chortled before laughing. "At this rate, I'm gonna get in trouble if I stay much longer." He downed his tea before straightening and leaving the office.

"So I can imagine that 'wife' line was an okay for me to see him?" I wondered lightly.

"Don't even think about it. As your older brother, I won't allow you to start seeing someone I work with. Especially Otori-san." Toshi remarked calmly.

I pouted. "Aww why not? I was with Hajime and you didn't mind that!" I exclaimed.

"That's because I knew Saitou longer than I've known Otori Keisuke. Besides, I'd have to kill him if he made you cry." He explained with the patience of a sage, stumping me.

I huffed and looked away. "You're so mean, nii-san!" I griped.

>Toshi seemed to smirk. "Being in charge of you isn't a popularity contest, little sister." He remarked simply.<p>

I sniffed.

* * *

><p>AN: _the second-to-last chapter! lol so Chizuru and Toshi are reunited at last... will they win the war against the Satcho army? read on, because this story is drawing to a close soon!_

also, you lot know the drill neh? thanks~

22. Dance of Wolves

A/N: _the final chapter!

>so when we last left off, Toshi and Chizuru were reunited on the brink of a possible victory over the Satcho army. will they overcome the enemy at last? will they accomplish what Toshi, Kondou-san, and the others originally strived so hard for?

>and what about Kazama's vendetta? enjoy the chap~

(**also**: _there's a little epilogue at the end of this chapter, so look forward to reading that. it's not the same ending as in 'Blood In', as some people have already asked in the past._)

(last) disclaimer: _i don't own Hakuouki; Kawa belongs to me._

* * *

><p>Chapter 22: Dance of Wolves**

Things were quiet in his office; too quiet, in my book.

I paused short of opening the door, feeling my shoulders slump as I exhaled softly before sliding the door open as quietly as I could.

>My eyes widened: a soft grin made my lips twitch upward.<p>

Toshi held Chizuru in his arms, both of them locked in a way-too-long-overdue kiss.

I beamed, closing the door as quietly as I'd opened it, pulling away to lean against the wall next to the doorway.

>A soft sigh escaped me.<p>

I looked up at the ceiling as my fingers found the dagger pendant again, holding it gently. "It's about damn time, isn't it, Souji?" I wondered more to myself, smiling again at the sight.

>I ran a hand through my hair as I released the pendant, walking back to my room.<p>

It was about damn well time that they kissed.

* * *

><p>"Kawa, stay at my back, got it?" He ordered, perking my ears.<p>

I looked around him and widened my eyes slightly to see a firing squad ready to shoot at us as we came closer to the gates.

"Toshi!|" I began.

>"Do as I say; that's an order, Yasakawa." He interjected.

I nodded reluctantly and eased my grip on the horse's reins a little. "_Hai_, nii-san," I replied.

"**AIM**!" The enemy general crowed as the guns went off.

>"Outta my way!" Toshi snarled as he drew his katana.

>A bullet hit him in the chest.<p>

"**TOSHI**!" I shouted, yanking on the reins as Chizuru fell off the horse, my horse whinnying as I steered him away to the trees, skidding to a halt and hopping off his back as I ran to his side.

"Chizuru," I beckoned alertly, looking at my brother worriedly as I turned him over from lying face-down, widening my eyes again at seeing blood staining his vest where the bullet had hit.

She came quickly to my side, widening her own eyes as blood pooled beneath him.

>"Toshi, wake up! Please, brother!" I exclaimed, looking at him and perking up as he opened his eyes to see us both at his side.<p>

"Kawa, are you two okay?" He asked.

I nodded. "Yeah, we're fine. Idiot, I coulda told you that charging

head-first into a firing squad was a bad move." I added wryly, feeling relieved and annoyed at the same time for his reckless behavior.

>He huffed wryly. "I'll have a hard time with pursuers, it's best we get out of here." He mused.<p>

I nodded again and looked at the girl. "Come on, we need to move," I advised, lifting him into a sitting position before she helped me get him to his feet.

Chizuru supported his left as I supported his right, the three of us moving away from the open and away into the safety of the trees.

:::::::::oOo:::::::::

The wind blew softly, making stray blossoms from the sakura tree dance around us.

>I smiled softly at the couple, looking up at the pink blossoms that looked white in the moon's light.<p>

Souji, they look so beautifulâ€|

The wind picked up suddenly, stirring my attention away from the dancing blossoms and towards the source of the sudden change in breeze; my eyes widened slightly.

A familiar pair of gleaming red eyes shined as the blonde head of Kazama Chikage came forward, stopping short of the right side of the tree.

>"I see you're still alive," he mused lowly.<p>

"Kazama-san!" Chizuru said in surprise.

"I've come to put an end to everything. On my pride, I will clear the filth marring my honor." Kazama stated.

>I perked up as Toshi stood on his own, walking forward.<p>

"I never expected you to come straight to Ezo. It would've been a major waste of time if I was dead!" Toshi spat, preparing to draw his _katana_.

I extended my right arm out and drew my own _katana_, glaring at Kazama as Chizuru stood next to me.

>"Please don't; Hijikata-san is terribly injured!" Chizuru exclaimed.<p>

"Keep quiet and watch." Toshi declared as he moved past us.

>"Toshi!" I barked alertly.<p>

"That's an order, Yasakawa. If someone's abandoned everything to challenge me, I should act like a true warrior." He quieted me, scowling at him.

"Hijikata-san," Chizuru began in awe.

"Iâ€| I will fight for what I believe in; I'll win so I can live!" Toshi proclaimed, surprising me.

"Toshi," I whispered before smiling softly despite feeling angered and worried for him.

>You've come so far, nii-san, I thought.

The loud clashing of blades rang in the air, reminding me of that night at Ikedaya.

>I clenched the hilt of my katana tight, remembering the blood he'd spilled, the injuries he'd sustained.

I knew Kazama wasn't the real reason this war had begun, but stillâ€¦|

If I couldn't kill the bastard who had begun this whole mess, I could kill Kazama Chikage for being in my way!

"Hijikata-san!" Chizuru exclaimed, jerking me from my thoughts.

>I looked at him as he straightened shakily, lunging again before Kazama knocked him down again with a flick of his right wrist.
That's it!

My teeth clenched and grinded together before I grunted softly and sprinted forward.

>"KAWA-CHAN!" Chizuru exclaimed loudly behind me.

Kazama caught my swing, knocking me away; I skidded back, digging my heels into the ground and glaring at him, _katana_ in hand shaking a little in my anger.

"I had begun to wonder when you would stick your nose into an affair that was never yours to begin with," he growled.

I smirked and shifted my right foot behind me by an inch, lowering my _katana_-wielding hand. "I'm not doing this to spite you. I'm doing it to avenge the man I loved!" I flew at him, slamming into his body as my _katana_ clashing with his own, sparks flying when our blades met.

Kazama sneered. "'The man you loved'? It wasn't that pathetic, weak **shit** of a fake oni Okita Souji was it?" He drawled, his gold eyes taunting.

I glowered at him, shoving harder until our blades disengaged with a growl in my throat. "The very same. You took his life from him that night at Ikedaya, and I can never forgive a dog like you." I snarled, leveling my _katana_ at his chest before charging.

He caught me, slamming his foot into my gut and knocking me away; I drew back, glaring at him before I spat out a wad of blood at his feet, the only thing fueling my motives now was my anger and pain and sorrow that I wanted to beat him back to hell with as I growled and flew at him head-on.

Kazama was drawing back as I sent blow after blow at him, blocking one or two in the fury swipes as every third or second blow nicked his skin or arms.

"You damn human whore!" He shoved me away, swiping at my neck.

I blocked him with Souji's _katana_, holding it vertically, ignoring

the wince at feeling blood drip down my right arm, most likely from where my first scar was; he looked surprised.

"It's pathetic enough to see a weak bastard like your brother try and kill me, but it's really pathetic to see a whorish woman like you play warrior!" Kazama lunged, disappearing from sight.

I widened my eyes slightly, feeling the air still at my back; I lifted Souji's katana quickly, small sparks flying when our blades met.

"Insult my brother again and your head is mine!" I shoved him away, grunting and lunging as I swung Souji's katana at his neck.

Blood stained the purple fabric of his left coat sleeve as he lifted his arm to block me in time; I glared at him, shoving the blade deeper into his arm until it stabbed through the other side.

He clenched his teeth in pain, blood flying before he glowered at me in something like rage. "I will commend you for laying a scratch on a pure-blood oni before your death." He rammed his knee into my stomach, throwing me away.

I managed to yank Souji's blade out of his arm before flying away, skidding into the ground on my back with a grunt of pain; I spat out another wad of blood, coughing and blearily looking up to see him stalking towards where I lay.

"You have no idea how long I've wanted to rip your throat out, you damn woman." Kazama swung his katana at me.

>"KAWA!" Chizuru shrieked.

A loud metallic 'klang' rang out, surprising her, myself, and Kazama.

"How many times have I told you to stay out of the way, Yasakawa?" Toshi wondered dryly, standing over me as he blocked Kazama's blade from descending. "Now get up." He ordered.

"Hijikata-san!" Chizuru declared in surprise and relief.

"Toshi," I breathed in surprise, obeying and straightening quickly to my feet, picking up Souji's katana as well as my own.

"Your business is with me, not my sister; I'd suggest you focus on being defeated by my hand, Kazama Chikage!" He flew at him, forcing him to fall back before the fighting continued between them.

"Kawa," Chizuru began as I retreated to stand with her, looking at my right arm I held gingerly.

"I'm okay, it's just a scratch." I assured her, looking at her worried brown eyes and smiling softly.

She nodded, looking at the fight again and clasping her hands together nervously.

>I sheathed my katana, holding onto the hilt of Souji's katana out of reflex as the wind blew softly past me.

Toshi, don't you dare die! Don't you leave us!

* * *

><p>EPILOGUE:**

Five years passed.

I looked at the clear day around me, smiling a little.

Toshi had won the battle with Kazama, at Ezo.

>Of course he'd been in a coma for a few months after that, but it was by some miracle that he woke up at last. He'd gotten a hell of a scolding from both Chizuru and me, when he was feeling better and on the mend.<p>

Once he was able to stand on his own feet again, they'd married.

I knew Souji would've been as happy as clam at seeing the sight.

>The boys would've been just as happy, and possibly tear up at seeing such a miracle occur.<p>

"Auntie Kawa!" A little voice barked from the porch, stirring me from my thoughts.

I looked to see a toddler of three years running towards me, her dark brown hair flying behind her; I smiled and knelt to catch her in my arms, laughing softly. "Sakura, there's my little niece!" I beamed and smiled again when she laughed.

"Auntie-chan, I'm so glad you're here! I missed you!" Sakura exclaimed, looking up at me with her big hazel-green eyes.

I laughed gently, setting her on her two feet. "Sakura, you were just here a few weeks ago. It's not like I packed up and left for Kyoto," I reminded lightly.

She pouted at me, making me smirk. "W-well don't ever leave; someday I'm gonna be big and strong like you, Auntie-chan!" She cried, perking my ears.

I tilted my head to one side. "'Big and strong like me' huh?" I wondered.

"Mm-hm, and I'm gonna wield Uncle Souji's sword too! Just like you and Daddy used to when you beat the bad guys a long time ago!" She stated loudly.

I grinned gently, running a hand through her wavy hair. "Keep listening to your dad spouting war stories and I might just place you in a dojo when you're bigger," I mused.

Her hazel eyes lit up. "Really, will you!? Oh please, Auntie-chan, please!" She exclaimed, jumping up and down in place.

I laughed softly, smiling at her. "We'll see, okay? Your dad wouldn't be very happy if I placed you in a dojo without telling him first." I replied.

"Sakura, there you are!" A voice declared from the porch, making us both look at the owner to see a pair of violet eyes looking at the girl.

"Daddy!" Sakura cried, sprinting for him; he chuckled when she hopped into his arms, holding her gently and looking at me as I held onto the broom. "Sorry about that. She's been dying to come see her favorite aunt," Toshi apologized, smiling slightly.

I shrugged and walked towards him, hopping onto the porch. "It's alright; you know I can never say no to her." I replied, smiling back and brushing locks of hair from my face.

"Daddy, Auntie Kawa says she's gonna let me be in a dojo when I'm big! Can I go, Daddy, please!?" Sakura begged, looking at him with puppy-dog hazel-green eyes.

Toshi sweatdropped and shot me a brief look before he smiled at her. "In a few years, okay, Sakura? You've still gotta stick around to help your mother when your new little sister comes." He replied, seeing her pout again, looking almost like Chizuru.

"Aww, but I'm not gonna wanna see the new baby! I wanna live here with Auntie Kawa!" She barked.

>I laughed sheepishly. "Honestly, Sakura," I began gently.<p>

He smirked gently and set her down. "I know, Sakura. Go find your mother, alright? She needs help with the bags," he urged, planting a kiss on her head before ushering her to the door.

Sakura looked at us before she smiled and sprinted back inside.

We both heaved a sigh of relief.

>"She's gotten bigger since last time," I mused, smiling softly.
"I know. Sometimes I wonder if it's not the mixed blood in her veins," he amended, his voice quieting at the memory.

I looked up at him. "Toshi, don't. You should be proud that you've got a daughter like her. Sakura, she may be half _oni_, but she's still a normal little girl. If we raise her as a normal child, then she'll never need to know about that. She'll be normal." I explained quietly, lifting a hand to grasp his wrist.

Toshi looked at me in something like surprise before his eyes softened and he nodded. "I suppose you're right." He looked at the spot where she'd been standing minutes ago and his eyes hardened. "I don't ever want to expose her to what happened, almost ten years ago. Just as with her mother, I intend to protect her from that darkness." He promised quietly.

I nodded and smiled up at him, squeezing his wrist slightly. "You've gotten stronger since then, nii-san." I mused.

He smirked softly and pulled his wrist free to sling his arm over my shoulders as we started going inside. "Shut up. And what was that nonsense about putting Sakura in a dojo?" He asked slowly, perking my ears.

I laughed weakly and smiled up at him. "Um, funny thingâ€¦" I began to declare.

Toshi's violet eyes hardened again, truly resembling the oni vice commander that he was. "I'm listening." He insisted lowly.
>I gulped silently. "It's hereditaryâ€|?" I managed.<p>

He cuffed me gently.
>"Ow, nii-san that hurt!" I yelped.<p>

Toshi chuckled softly.

* * *

><p>AN: _okay, so that's the last chapter. i hope you guys have enjoyed reading this as much as i've enjoyed writing this fic! if you haven't reviewed already, please do so. _

on a side note, i'm probably going to continue with where '**Gengetsu'**_', my Hakuouki Reimeiroku fic, left off. who knows, i might just make a few more twists and tweaks into the plot than i did with this ('_**Ameyuri'**_)? lol anyway, look forward to seeing that sometime later on in the future._

_sayonara til later__**~ xPorcelain Vampirex**_

End
file.